History and hermeneutics : the philosophy of R.G. Collingwood and its theological application.

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HISTORY AND HERMENEUTICS: THE PHILOSOPHY OF R. G. COLLINGWOOD AND ITS THEOLOGICAL APPLICATION

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of the philosopher Robin George Collingwood. It proceeds along three avenues. First, contrary to the received interpretation which sees Collingwood's later work, exemplified by the essay on *Metaphysics*, as accepting complete historical relativism, I argue that the *Metaphysics* is better understood within the context of hermeneutics, and how careful consideration of his hermeneutics of history can have helpful and illuminating theological applications. Both 'absolute presuppositions' and the controversial notion of 'unconscious thought' function as a critique of subjectivism.

The second avenue investigates the status of the doctrine of re-enactment. In common with recent research I argue that the doctrine is best understood as a transcendental condition of history. Collingwood is, therefore, clarifying the conditions for an understanding of the past, rather than providing the historian with a method. I argue that re-enactment is a 'grammatical' investigation into the nature of the historical object, and I support this argument by a detailed account of the linguistic nature of Collingwood's philosophy. Following the school of analytical philosophy of history, I argue that re-enactment is a thesis about historical explanation as opposed to explanation by general laws.

An argument against the limitation of re-enactment to the bounds of historical explanation forms the third avenue of research. While the doctrine is certainly an example of historical explanation, there is too much evidence pointing to its hermeneutical dimension to leave the issue there. I argue that Collingwood anticipates many of the themes common to the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer, and I attempt to systematize these using Gadamer as the yardstick.

Finally, in a concluding chapter, I draw all these arguments together within a theological context. I show that re-enactment is a valid model of historical explanation by appropriating Edward Schillebeeckx's account of the rejection and death of the historical Jesus. In an effort to demonstrate the hermeneutical aspect of re-enactment I end with an account of Schillebeeckx's translation of Christ's divinity into terms of universal significance.

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C. D.

ABBREVIATIONS

After the first citation in every chapter, the following works will be referred to in the footnotes using the abbreviations below.

Works by Collingwood

A	*An Autobiography*
EM	*An Essay on Metaphysics*
EPM	*An Essay on Philosophical Method*
IH	*The Idea of History*
IN	*The Idea of Nature*
NL	*The New Leviathan*
PA	*The Principles of Art*
RP	*Religion and Philosophy*
SM	*Speculum Mentis*

Published articles and lectures

LPH	Lectures on the Philosophy of History (1926)
OPH	Outlines of a Philosophy of History (1928)
OS	Oswald Spengler and the Theory of Historical Cycles (1927)
OSIC	On the So-called Idea of Causation (1937-38)

Unpublished manuscripts

PH	*The Principles of History* (1939-40)
RH	Reality as History (1935)

Works by Others

CRM	L. Rubinoff, *Collingwood and the Reform of Metaphysics*
HE	R. Bultmann, *History and Eschatology*
HR	W. H. Dray, *History as Re-enactment*
HS	W. J. van der Dussen, *History as a Science*
IR	E. Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report on the Books Jesus and Christ*
LAE	W. H. Dray, *Laws and Explanation in History*
OHCU	J. Habermas, On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality
OHK	P. Gardiner, The Objects of Historical Knowledge
PCH	F. H. Bradley, The Presuppositions of Critical History
RHCI	H. G. Gadamer, Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and the Critique of Ideology
TCM	Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*
TM	H. G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*
TN	P. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*

INTRODUCTION

Collingwood's polemic against the realism of G. E. Moore, Bertrand Russell and J. Cook-Wilson, the mainstream of British philosophy in his day, and his forthright, intemperate yet wonderful *Autobiography*, allowed his colleagues to write him off as an idealist or worse, an ancient historian who had wandered into philosophy under a misapprehension.[1] Yet unlike G. R. Mure, it was difficult to dismiss Collingwood as a mere follower of F. H. Bradley. He did not follow; rather, he developed ideas in his personal 'laboratory of knowledge' until what was fertile in them came to fruition in his own philosophy of history, moral philosophy and archaeology. Thus, in an academic world obsessed by 'schools', such intellectual isolation, in part an outcome of Collingwood's character of self-reliance, cultivated the sense that if he was a philosopher then he must be some kind of quasi-idealist. Of course in a period obsessed by an epistemology based on perception the tradition of idealism spoke most certainly to those equally obsessed by historical existence.

Yet if Collingwood attempted to show the realists the importance of history to the practice of philosophy, this was not because he had any particular allegiance to G. W. F. Hegel or W. Dilthey but because he believed that in studying the history of their own 'atomism', Moore and Russell would recognize the true conditions of philosophical activity. Such an emphasis discloses the hermeneutical tenor of Collingwood's philosophy even though he never uses the word 'hermeneutics'.

The view that Collingwood was a systematic philosopher, while true, must not be overplayed. A basic objective of the present work is to demonstrate that systematic though his work is, Collingwood's sensitivity to historicity discloses an equally definite emphasis on historical pluralism. In this respect, Chapter 1 will review the 'received' interpretation which gained currency following the publication of the *Autobiography* and the *Metaphysics*. This interpretation sees Collingwood as someone who gave up idealism for complete relativism. In recent years Lionel Rubinoff has attempted to rehabilitate Collingwood by appealing to the idea that his thought is expressive of a single system. Yet if Rubinoff appeals to a dialectical monism in order to demonstrate Collingwood's credibility as a philosopher, I shall emphasize a pluralism that prevents any attempt to resolve the past or the historical agent into an all-inclusive system. Within this context, the *Metaphysics*, in its pursuit of the conditions of philosophical activity, loses its association with a thorough-going historical relativism and, paradoxically, mirrors the universal hermeneutic of Hans-Georg Gadamer. I shall argue that Collingwood anticipates themes found in *Truth and Method* and it is a task of the present work to systematize these, using Gadamer as the measure.

Together with this emphasis on historical pluralism, which makes Collingwood a more interesting and discriminating figure, I shall pursue, in Chapters 2 and 3, a detailed

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[1]S. Toulmin, 'Introduction' to *An Autobiography*, p. xi.

investigation into the status of the doctrine of 're-enactment'. I devote considerable space to the doctrine, because a major objective of the present work is to show that re-enacting or re-thinking the thoughts of historical agents can be pursued within a theological context. Until recently the most persistent reading of the doctrine assumed that Collingwood believed historical method was intuitive. In common with more recent interpretation I reject the intuitive version of re-enactment and focus instead on its transcendental or conceptual character. While the intuitive interpretation divorced re-enactment from Collingwood's understanding of historical inference and causation, the conceptual interpretation affords the reader the opportunity to consider the proper relation between re-enactment and historical method. This relation will be pursued in Chapters 4 and 5. Furthermore, the conceptual interpretation discloses the linguistic nature of Collingwood's philosophy. The fact that the 'linguistic turn' is part of his philosophy rescues re-enactment from an intuitive or Cartesian dualism, and demonstrates, perhaps surprisingly, that Collingwood was sensitive to the pursuit of the proper relation between thought and language. The emphasis on the semantic as opposed to the intuitive or psychological character of re-thinking legitimates the doctrine and secures it against attempts to take it too literally.

While I pursue the historical intention of re-enactment in Chapters 2 to 5, the doctrine cannot be confined to this limit but escapes and overlaps into hermeneutics. Re-enactment certainly receives its context within analytical philosophy of history and its pursuit of the logic of historical explanation, but there is too much evidence pointing to its hermeneutical intention to confine it to this limit. The key to this overlap is disclosed if we subject the conceptual nature of re-enactment to hermeneutical reflection. By pursuing a grammatical analysis of re-thinking, analytical philosophers of history, because they are sensitive to the thesis of historical explanation, fail to recognize that development must form a part of what is re-thought. Thus, Chapter 6, while systematizing the ideas found in Chapter 1, addresses Collingwood's recognition that, by re-thinking past thought in the present, the past thought develops because the situation in which it is thought has altered.

In the conclusion, Chapter 7, I shall argue that Edward Schillebeeckx's account of the rejection and death of Jesus is an excellent illustration of re-enactment in its historical aspect. The pursuit of re-enactment as a model of historical explanation is especially relevant, because in theological circles re-enactment has either been avoided on the grounds that the nature of the New Testament will not allow it, or has been understood by Bultmann and others as a thesis about historicity rather than historical explanation. Schillebeeckx's account is significant in this respect, because he, like Collingwood, appeals to the semantic nature of an historical agent's self-understanding, and offers a persuasive account which shows that the New Testament displays a more marked historical intention than Bultmann and his school allowed. While an emphasis on the historical intention of re-enactment is a major objective of

Chapter 7, I shall also review, in the interests of systematic thought, Schillebeeckx's attempt to translate, in the light of hermeneutics, Christ's divinity into terms of universal significance.

CHAPTER ONE

Creative Tensions in Collingwood's Philosophy: Monism versus Pluralism

Introduction

The focus of this chapter will fall upon Collingwood's controversial book the *Essay on Metaphysics*. Accusations of a conversion from idealism to complete historical relativism and scepticism accompanied the reception of the book and have now become the 'received' interpretation of Collingwood's later work. In recent years Rubinoff, a name as intimately linked to Collingwood studies as W. H. Dray, attempted to annul such criticism by appealing to the systematic nature of Collingwood's philosophy. Rubinoff shares with T. M. Knox, whose views, ironically, became the most authoritative, the idea that Collingwood's philosophy *ought to be* expressive of a single system. For Knox, Collingwood's position in the *Essay on Philosophical Method* promised so much only to disappoint: the obsession with history spoiling the systematic ideal. Rubinoff, beginning with Collingwood's *Speculum Mentis*, a phenomenological archetype of the essay on *Method*, attempts to demonstrate that Collingwood never wavered from the system set forth in that essay: the *Metaphysics* is simply an example of the dialectic expounded in the essay on *Method*.

In what follows I propose to challenge this view. While Collingwood was an advocate of systematic philosophy, the interpreter of his thought has to reckon with his acute sensitivity towards the problem of historical existence. There is, as it were, something irreducible about the *Metaphysics* that prevents the interpreter placing it alongside the essay on *Method*. The *Metaphysics* is expressive of a pluralism, of an engagement with the past as it is in itself, which resists any submersion within an all-inclusive system. A living tension exists, in other words, between Collingwood's desire for unity, expressed so eloquently in the essay on *Method*, and his recognition of a pluralism that compelled him to write about historical existence in a way which contradicted the canons of dialectical logic as outlined in that essay. This is not to say that the accent on plurality means Collingwood acquiesced in that relativism so often proclaimed of him. Pluralism is not the same as relativism. I take relativism to mean, whether it is possible or not, the assumption of complete incommensurability between different cultural systems, such that no communication or understanding is possible because each speaks a language wholly private to itself. By contrast, I understand pluralism to mean the recognition of a real difference between cultural systems which nevertheless can be appreciated or understood on the basis of our common humanity. More particularly, in Collingwood's view, this means the re-thinking of the fundamental assumptions of different cultures, and the adherence to the idea that there is one historical process. In view of this latter point, Collingwood's attempted *rapprochement* between philosophy and history is a continuous thread running through his work which absolves the later

work of any thorough-going relativism, without denying that relativity (in the sense of a rejection of an unconditional standpoint) is an important feature of that work. By giving historical pluralism its due the hermeneutical basis of Collingwood's philosophy will be disclosed. I offer no excursus on hermeneutics. A major objective of the present chapter is to indicate two areas of Collingwood's thought which can be taken as expressive of all good hermeneutics. First, I shall illustrate that Collingwood's rejection of superior understanding, a central feature of Gadamer's work, enables the interpreter to give a better account of Collingwood's hermeneutics than at present exists. Secondly, the focus falls upon the controversial notion of 'unconscious thought' from the *Metaphysics*. I shall argue that this notion is a synonym for 'tradition'. Before proceeding to the argument, I offer a brief excursus on Collingwood.

(I)

Collingwood in his Wider Intellectual Context

> The official philosophy of the day is the realism of Moore and the rest; a very bad philosophy it is, in my opinion, as in yours; but it prevails at present, and those who disagree with it are either abused or merely neglected.[1]

While serving to show the intellectual isolation he suffered in the Oxford of his day, these words disclose Collingwood's own particular way of doing philosophy. Recent British philosophy, always sensitive to its empiricist heritage, derives its inspiration from work on the foundations of mathematics as pursued by Russell and G. Frege. It is the method of analysis set in hand by both men which, in the main, is characteristic of philosophy in these islands. To those indebted to analysis, professional competence came to be identified with philosophical specialization. By contrast, Collingwood was a practitioner of his own peculiar style of systematic philosophy which he intended for the general public. He believed that philosophy should be written according to the rules of literature rather than attempt to approximate itself to the precision of a technical discipline. He did not, as Dray describes, "exhibit that love of exact language which analytic philosophers have since made *de rigueur*."[2] Thus, while rightly praised for the poetic sensibility of his prose, the literary character of Collingwood's work presents the reader with special difficulties of interpretation.

§ 1. A Problem of Interpretation: Collingwood's Style

As an advocate of 'expressiveness', 'flexibility' and 'dependence upon context', three central features of his understanding of literary style[3], his writings, when carefully read, are not always

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[1]Collingwood, in letter to Guido de Ruggiero 4 October 1921. Bodleian, dep. 27.
[2]Dray, *History as Re-enactment*, 27.
[3]*Essay on Philosophical Method*, 207.

easy to grasp. By adhering to his own call upon philosophers "to avoid the technical vocabulary proper to science"[4] Collingwood has to fashion technical terms out of his prose. Consequently, a term like 're-enactment', while certainly a technical term, "functions so little like a precisely defined technical term ... that there are upward of a dozen apparent synonyms for it in his writings."[5] It is this peculiar amalgam of the almost free-play of his literary style with the need for clarity independent of technical language, which allows, even demands, Collingwood's resort to metaphor. This is none more evident than in his adoption of the 'outside-inside' metaphor which will be discussed in Chapter 2. This metaphor is a prime example of the difficulty critics have when interpreting Collingwood's thought on history. Yet as I shall indicate, the resort to metaphor does raise the question of why this particular linguistic 'trope' is employed with such frequency.

A further complication is that Collingwood's writings are not always careful in statement, and are often prone to exaggeration. In one place, for example, he identifies historical inference with the level of certainty gained in a mathematical demonstration,[6] while in another he urges that science and history are identical disciplines simply because they both employ generalizations.[7] Sometimes, therefore, due to this tendency towards exaggeration, my aim is to reconstruct Collingwood's considered position where clarity is absent.

Another trait which makes the interpreter's task difficult is Collingwood's tendency to contradict himself. At one point, for example, he says that the proper attitude to history is that of a spectator,[8] while at another he declares that the historian must enter imaginatively into the past.[9] Again in one place he says that historical thinking is not perception while in another that it is the highest form of perception.[10] These contradictions can be soften somewhat if we take the rule of 'dependence upon context' to heart, and also bear in mind that Collingwood's interpretation of historical studies has its own history. As other critics have recognized,[11] however, Collingwood did not always acknowledge his change of mind, and one therefore sometimes finds him criticizing others for what he had previously held himself.

There is also the problem of his apparent intellectual arrogance. Collingwood had a peculiar sense of his own gifts and capacities, and tended, it seems to me, to read this awareness into his writing about human nature in general. There is, I think, a connection to be made here between the sense of his own abilities, and his consistent appeal to the concept of human agency. The consequences of this connection shall, in part, occupy the argument of Chapter 4.

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[4]EPM, 207.
[5]Dray, HR, 28.
[6]*The Idea of History*, 262.
[7]Collingwood, 'Are History and Science' 32.
[8]Collingwood, 'The Nature and Aims', 47.
[9]IH, 218.
[10]IH, 222; 'The Nature and Aims', 49.
[11]MacKinnon 'R. G. Collingwood'; Dray HR, 29f.

Furthermore, it is well-known that his lectures, while highly popular, did not make any allowance for the weaker student. The lecture on 're-enactment' included in *The Idea of History* is evidence enough for this. He also placed high demands on his readers. At one point he bids farewell to any reader who does not agree with him, complaining that the reader must know little of the subject and therefore "the best thing he can do is to stop [reading] here and now."[12] In another place Collingwood snaps at an imaginary interlocutor who is bold enough to demand a justification for the view of historical inference he has taken: "I'm not arguing, I'm telling you."[13] Knox, the first editor of Collingwood's writings, attempted to build these examples of uneven temper into an argument that purports to make sense of Collingwood's apparent fall into historical relativism. The supposed change of direction in thought is, according to Knox, the result of Collingwood's ill-health. The traces of irritability and arrogance are its symptoms. Yet I believe the real context of such remarks is to be found not in a fall into historical relativism brought on by ill-health, but in what he saw as the disastrous influence of 'realism' on British philosophy coupled with the growing realization of his own impending death. In this situation, his supposed arrogance is better understood as the demeanour of someone conscious that he had something vital to say, but little time in which to say it. Consequently, he refrained from lengthy discussions of his own and critics' views.[14]

§ 2. The General Character of Collingwood's Philosophy

The systematic nature of Collingwood's philosophy is derived from the 'Ruskinian' education imparted by his father. As William Johnston argues: "Collingwood did not dream up the ideal of a many-sided intellectual life; he inherited it."[15] It is this principle, expressed in *Speculum Mentis* (1924) as 'the unity of mind' - "a general interpenetration of the various activities of the mind, in which each was influenced by all"[16] - which he saw as the fundamental principle of Christianity, i.e. "that the only life worth living is the life of the whole man, every faculty of body and soul unified into a single organic system."[17] It is on behalf of this principle, together with an eye on the 'Greats' curriculum at Oxford, that he criticized Prichard and Russell, and by implication Moore, for reducing moral philosophy to a theory which had nothing to do with moral action.[18] The accent on 'interpenetration', the necessary relation between thought and action,[19] discloses the dialectical nature of Collingwood's philosophy.

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[12]IH, 256.
[13]IH, 263.
[14]Collingwood, *Autobiography*, 118.
[15]Johnston, *The Formative Years*, 28.
[16]*Speculum Mentis*, 27.
[17]SM, 36.
[18]A, 44-52.
[19]"All thought exists for the sake of action." SM, 15.

The concept of dialectic is exemplified in almost all of Collingwood's works after *Religion and Philosophy* (1916) although summarised in none.[20] It is obvious from *Speculum Mentis* with its progressive account of art, religion, science, history, and philosophy that Collingwood derived the impetus of his dialectical vision from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and more distantly from Plato.[21] The attempt to encompass reality within the confines of a single system, a feature of which was to illustrate that the ingestion of past thought by present thought implied the superiority of the present, shows that he was an advocate of Hegel's dialectical monism. Yet alongside this monistic conception of reality with "its resolute envisagement of the spirit as a single and indivisible whole"[22] which allowed him, much to the irritation of his colleagues, to mount 'border raids' (I owe the phrase to D. MacKinnon) on other provinces of experience, Collingwood's appeal to dialectic discloses his obsession with history:

> You say that philosophers must abandon their hostility to dialectic: I agree; but this hostility does not exist, I think, among the historical philosophers of Italy, but only among the scientific philosophers of England. Science is hostile to dialectic, history is not; and if a philosopher acquires a dialectical point of view this means that he is acquiring a historical point of view.[23]

This appeal to the coincidence of dialectic and history appears at first sight confined to Collingwood's pursuit of dialectical monism. In *The New Leviathan* (1942), for example, which offers a philosophy of mind in dialectical development, an account of mind which underlies most of Collingwood's work, there is a section entitled 'Retrospect'. Here he resolves what mind is - mind understood as the embodiment of European civilisation with its traditions - into what mind does. This means that a dialectical development, in general terms a movement from the implicit to the explicit, can only come to know what was implicit retrospectively. The attempt to understand a problem or a proposition necessitates, in other words, an inquiry into its history; into how it came to be what it is. Such an approach discloses the impetus behind Collingwood's criticism of 'realism'. Nothing was more disheartening to Collingwood than the complete failure of Cook-Wilson, Moore and Russell to engage with the historicity of understanding. Their pursuit of knowledge unmoved by considerations of temporality implied, in Collingwood's view, the impossibility of history.[24] Yet while these are dialectical ideas, it is nonetheless important to see that the pursuit of the antecedents of understanding within the contextual conditions of an historical text or event discloses a sensitivity on Collingwood's part to a pluralism which resists any subsumption within a dialectical monism. He reveals such an attitude when in an article from

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[20]See Mink's, 'Collingwood's Historicism'.
[21]"Plato's discovery was *how the intellect could find its way about in a Heraclitean world*. The answer is: *think dialectically*." *The New Leviathan*, 24. 63, his emphases.
[22]Collingwood, 'Ruskin's Philosophy', 41.
[23]Collingwood, in a letter to de Ruggerio 9 January 1931, Bodleian, dep. 27.
[24]IH, 233.

1927 he criticizes O. Spengler for failing to see that "history deals with the individual in all its individuality."[25] Offering a practical example from architecture in an article from 1929 Collingwood asserts: "the buildings of one age are not more beautiful than those of another - since each has its own beauty, not to be assessed in terms of any other - the aesthetic problem of any age's architecture is *unique*: that is to say, a particular age has the task of realising beauty in a particular way."[26] Yet this is not an appeal to an atomism like Spengler's which encloses each culture within a hermetically sealed capsule with the consequence of complete relativism. On the contrary, in Collingwood's view, the historian can, by the force of imaginative insight, understand the thought of past cultures: "If history is possible, if we can understand other cultures, we can do so only by re-thinking for ourselves their thoughts."[27] Collingwood's appeal to thought, a central notion of his philosophy of history, is here understood as a synonym for the humanity (and inhumanity) which is common to us and which provides the bridge between past and present cultures.

If Collingwood, in his appeal to systematic philosophy, dismayed his Oxford colleagues because he claimed all experience as his province, he was himself a good deal irritated at being "habitually labelled an Idealist".[28] But as he says in the *Autobiography* (1939), anyone who opposed the 'realists' was automatically classified as an idealist.[29] The terms realism and idealism are not fixed and unchanging: what they mean to one is not what they mean to another. Idealism to MacKinnon, for example, is expressive of an attempt to avoid reckoning with inescapable fact. The idealist is one who takes refuge in a self-sufficiency creative of its own objects.[30] To Wittgenstein, we are told by F. Kerr, the idealist is "the man who has to have a *reason* for accepting the existence even of his own hands."[31] His relation to the world is essentially cognitive. Consequently, it is better, I suspect, to take Collingwood's advice: "Why not see what a man's views *are*, before deciding to what class (if for some obscure reason you *must* classify them) you shall refer them?"[32]

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[25]'Oswald Spengler', 67.
[26]'A Philosophy of Progress', 116, my emphasis.
[27]OS, 71.
[28]Collingwood, in a letter dated 30 March 1935 to Samuel Alexander on the occasion of his election as Waynflete Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy. It reads in full: "the electors were, I learn, a good deal tickled that a candidate habitually labelled an Idealist should send in as his only testimonial, one from our leading Realist." Bodleian, dep. 26/1.
[29]A, 56f. Collingwood protests against G. Ryle in a letter, "I resent both the label [idealist], and the irresponsible manner of attaching it" ... I have "no particular allegiance to Plato, Kant in his less Humian moods, and Hegel." This pertains to Ryle's article, 'Mr. Collingwood and the Ontological Argument' following the publication of Collingwood's EPM. Bodleian, dep. 26/3.
[30]MacKinnon, *Explorations*, 24, 164.
[31]Kerr, *Theology*, 119, his emphasis.
[32]Collingwood in a letter to G. Ryle, his emphases. Bodleian, dep. 26/3.

It is evident from his adoption of a systematic framework for his philosophy that Collingwood belongs more intimately to the continental tradition of philosophy characterized by Hegel, Marx and Croce. Yet it would be a mistake to count him a disciple of any of the former. Furthermore, Gadamer's attempt to claim Collingwood as 'one of our own' in respect of German Romanticism does not quite ring true; he was too English and rational for that.[33] Nevertheless, it is true to say that the inspiration behind Collingwood and the aforementioned is what MacKinnon has called 'a sense of history'.[34] By this he means not "an achievement which inspired confidence in the methods that made it possible;" but rather "an awareness which seemed to set a question-mark against all work which tried to by-pass it."[35]

Unlike the realists and Russell in particular, who to the end of his life spoke of Kant's influence on philosophy as a disaster, Collingwood understood what had compelled Kant to undertake his three Critiques. "Kant", MacKinnon tells us, "had seen the necessity of justifying fundamental assumptions about the order of the physical universe; he steadfastly refused the escape offered by an appeal to intuitive self-evidence."[36] Yet Collingwood saw that the critical question was raised less by physics and more by the problems of historical existence. While the critical problem was always with him, he believed the creation of a *Critique of Historical Reason*, as planned but never written by Dilthey, was still some way off:

> History occupies in the world of today a position analogous to that occupied by physics in the time of Locke: it is recognized as a special and autonomous form of thought, lately established, whose possibilities have not yet been completely explored.[37]

But while he offered the lectures on the idea of history as an example of the autonomy of history, Collingwood also attempted to anticipate "a philosophy of history in the wide sense, i.e., a complete philosophy conceived from an historical point of view."[38] Thus he saw the realists as a relic of a past age; they were in bondage to conceptions which were obsolete. He "regarded their

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[33]Gadamer writes: "Auf eine überraschende, fast rätselhafte Weise ist dieser fremde Denker und Schriftsteller für uns kein Fremder, und wenn er jetzt auf deutsch zu uns zu reden beginnt, ist er fast wie ein Heimgekehrter, der seine geistige Heimat draussen, wo er lebte und kämpfte, nie vergass. Diese Heimat ist die grosse weiträumige Landschaft der deutschen Romantik und der 'Historischen Schule', Hegels und Schellings, Humboldts, Rankes und Droysens, Schleiermachers und Diltheys, von der das deutsche Philosophieren unserer Jahrzehnte noch immer in unverkennbarer Weise zeugt." *Denken*, vii.

[34]Collingwood exhibits the same idea: "Learning does not make the historian; there is a *sense* of history which is not acquired through erudition, and for this historical sense we look to Spengler in vain." OS, 67, his emphasis.

[35]MacKinnon, 'R. G. Collingwood', 169f. Even though short and impressionistic, MacKinnon captures with unique penetration, the 'essential' Collingwood. Consequently, it is a great pity that of the studies of Collingwood that I have seen not any know of its existence.

[36]MacKinnon, 'R. G. Collingwood', 171.

[37]IH, 209.

[38]IH, 7.

methods as incapable of renewing effectively for their own age the kind of deeply critical appreciation of the human significance of the changes taking place, which had [characterized] the eighteenth century."[39] Collingwood's polemic against realism is, in other words, not "concerned with a doctrine concerning the status of objects of perception" but "with an attempted flight from the besetting problems of men's historical existence."[40] It would be a grave mistake, therefore, to judge Collingwood an idealist on such grounds. There is no doubt, however, that Collingwood's preference for a systematic philosophy like Hegel's discloses his use of identity-based thinking. Understood dialectically, the divergent philosophies *in toto* are a single philosophy of which particular historical philosophies are only components or critical moments. Be that as it may, throughout the thesis this resort to identity-based thinking will be treated as a 'recessive' doctrine in order to avoid its alignment with the idea that Collingwood believes 're-enactment' to be a thesis about *numerical* identity. Only in Chapter 6 will I treat of the problem of identity-based thinking. Yet in spite of this tendency towards identity, we have to reckon with the fact that Collingwood's exploration of the conditions of historical existence, and his appeal to the self as agent, disclose a plurality which refuses to be resolved without residue into any monistic or deterministic system. In fact this appeal to plurality in history becomes, in the sequel, the means of accounting for the place of the *Essay on Metaphysics* (1940) in Collingwood's *oeuvre*.

(II)

The Conflict of Interpretations: Monist or Pluralist?

§ 1. Collingwood's Supposed Historical Relativism

The most enduring problem which afflicts any attempt to render Collingwood's philosophy intelligible as a whole is the problem of how to account for the *Essay on Metaphysics*. The parameters of the debate surrounding the *Metaphysics* can be described as follows. With the exception of Rubinoff, critics of Collingwood's philosophy see the *Metaphysics* as a fundamental departure from the type of philosophy that Collingwood had advocated earlier. Thus, whether one believes the *Metaphysics* is a departure from an earlier style, or whether with Rubinoff, one believes that it is of a piece with that work, some reason must be advanced to account for it. It is to be noted that both sides of this debate share the doctrine that the idea of an all-inclusive system defined the true character of Collingwood's philosophy. Thus, for the majority of critics the *Metaphysics* is an aberration, something totally out of character. By contrast, for Rubinoff, it is simply an example of systematic philosophy. In what follows I aim to show that this shared

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[39]MacKinnon, 'Faith and Reason', 88.
[40]MacKinnon, 'R. G. Collingwood', 171.

doctrine not only prevents a recognition of the real particularity of Collingwood's thought, but also obscures the hermeneutical basis of his thought.

In the *Metaphysics* Collingwood converts metaphysics into an historical science. He rejects the Aristotelian view that metaphysics is an account of being *qua* being, and the idea that metaphysics is concerned to give a comprehensive account of certain concepts, involved in discourse concerning any subject-matter whatsoever,[41] replacing this with an account of the fundamental assumptions or 'absolute presuppositions' that are presupposed within (European) civilisation; these presuppositions at the same time being the condition for intellectual innovation. Their 'logical efficacy' comes not from their being true - for they are absolute and cannot in this respect be referred to anything to determine their truth - but simply from their being supposed. On the strength of this, interpreters have understood Collingwood to be advocating an historical and cultural relativism. It is supposed that changes in absolute presuppositions, understood as "entirely independent and self-sufficient"[42] principles determine changes in historical and cultural outlook leading to complete incommensurability between different conceptual systems. According to Knox, an advocate of such a view, the *Metaphysics* is evidence of a transition in Collingwood's thought from idealism to complete relativism which he believes occurred between 1936 and 1938.[43] Knox substantiates this view by citing a passage which he says comes from a manuscript written by Collingwood in 1936:

> St. Augustine looked at Roman history from the point of view of an early Christian; Tillemont, from that of a seventeenth-century Frenchman; Gibbon, from that of an eighteenth-century Englishman; Mommsen, from that of a nineteenth-century German. There is no point in asking which was the right point of view. Each was the only one possible for the man who adopted it.[44]

Such a statement, according to Knox, finds its counterpart in Collingwood's idea that "philosophy as a separate discipline is liquidated by being converted into history."[45] Thus, in coming to believe that human beings are prisoners of their own contemporary circumstance, Collingwood renounced the possibility of a system of thought. This view implies that Collingwood rejected the dialectic expounded in the *Essay on Philosophical Method* (1933) which, as Knox declares, exhibited "a scale of forms related to one another as lower is to higher in a process of development,"[46] and replaced it with self-sufficient 'absolute presuppositions', and in so doing "abandoned a philosophy of history."[47] This subsequently became the leading interpretative key

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[41]MacKinnon, *Explorations*, 147.
[42]Toulmin, 'Conceptual Change', 212.
[43]Knox, IH, xi.
[44]Knox, IH, xii.
[45]Collingwood, 'Notes on Historiography', Bodleian, dep. 13/3, cited Knox, IH, x.
[46]Knox, IH, ix.
[47]Knox, IH, xviii.

to Collingwood's later thought.[48] Alan Donagan goes so far as to say that this view "*must* be the foundation of any interpretation of his later works."[49]

More recently this account of Collingwood, propagated by Knox, Donagan and Stephen Toulmin, has received fundamental criticism. I do not intend to review this criticism; instead I propose to deal with their arguments only in so far as they trespass on the problem in hand: the disclosure of the hermeneutical basis of Collingwood's thought. In what follows I shall demonstrate that there are two strands to Collingwood's thought: a monism, characterized by a dialectical movement towards the progressive realization of a genus, as expounded in *An Essay on Philosophical Method*; secondly, a pluralism, which in the light of his insight into historical existence, rejects the emphasis on a progressive realization of a genus. The *Metaphysics* belongs to this second strand.

Along with the disclosure of this hermeneutical basis, the conclusion reached will show that the absence of a 'scale of forms' analysis in the *Metaphysics* is not proof of a conversion to historical relativism; but rather evidence for the fact that Collingwood's *oeuvre* is not the expression of a single system. On the contrary, Collingwood shows a marked concern for different levels of inquiry which cannot be enveloped within a 'scale of forms' analysis.

§ 2. Monism: The Dialectic of the 'Overlap of Classes' and 'Scale of Forms'

The idea of dialectic is such a pervasive feature of Collingwood's thought that it functions as the central key to his thought as a whole. Therefore, while I shall argue that Collingwood's thought on history rejects the idea of superior understanding which follows from the progressive realization of a genus, this does not rule out that his understanding of history partakes of a dialectical structure. There are, in other words, dialectical ideas which are common to every department of Collingwood's thought which are not dependent on the idea of superior understanding.

The *Essay on Philosophical Method* is characterized by an attempt on Collingwood's part to differentiate 'scientific' (empirical rather than *wissenschaftlich*) concepts from 'philosophical' concepts. The distinction was first made explicit by Collingwood in his 1925 article 'Economics as a Philosophical Science'. Here he treats of empirical concepts, for example, money and credit as applying to specific classes of fact, but philosophical concepts, for example, labour and utility as tending to expand to apply to all rational actions. This distinction, between the 'empirical' and the 'philosophical', appears in all of Collingwood's later work but none more so than in *The Principles of Art* (1937) where Collingwood begins his book with the problem of defining 'work of art' in the empirical sense, and ends by identifying art with language: "every

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[48]See MacKinnon, 'R. G. Collingwood', 170; Lash, *Theology on the Way*, 63.
[49]Donagan, *The Later Philosophy*, 12, my emphasis.

utterance and every gesture that each one of us makes is a work of art."[50] The distinction between the empirical and philosophical concept is present in Collingwood's lectures on moral philosophy up to 1933, providing a clue to the ethical tenor of the essay on *Method*, and appears in that essay as the doctrine of the 'overlap of classes':

> when a concept has a dual significance, philosophical and non-philosophical. in its non-philosophical phase it qualifies a limited part of reality, whereas in its philosophical phase it leaks or escapes out of these limits and invades the neighbouring regions, tending at last to colour our thought of reality as a whole. As a non-philosophical concept it observes the rules of classification, its instances forming a class separate from other classes; as a philosophical concept it breaks those rules and the class of its instances overlaps those of its co-ordinate species.[51]

On the traditional theory of classification a genus is divisible into separate species so that every concept must have a group of instances to itself. However, a philosophical concept does not obey this rule: an action that is dutiful does not prevent it from being to my advantage.[52]

The basic point Collingwood makes when he introduces the analysis of a 'scale of forms' is that the scale is a combination of differences in kind and degree so that the genus is specified in a peculiar way:

> The species into which it is divided are so related that each not only embodies the generic essence in a specific manner, but also embodies some variable attribute in a specific degree. In respect of the variable, each specific form of the concept differs from the rest in degree; in respect of the manner in which the generic essence is specified, each differs from the rest in kind... A system of this kind I propose to call a scale of forms.[53]

It is on this basis that Collingwood outlines his 'logic' of dialectic. In the first place the idea that the species of a genus not only expands a genus (in kind) *via* an overlap, but also alters the character of the genus means that Collingwood is not suggesting that there is something identical with regard to all the instances of a concept. Rather, on a scale, a concept like goodness in its lower form "is not only good in general; it is good in a specific way; and if by comparison with its neighbour it loses its goodness, what it loses cannot be merely goodness in general; it must be this specific kind of goodness."[54] While this may seem to have some superficial parallel with Wittgenstein's notion of 'family likeness'[55] the difference is fundamental in so far as Collingwood identifies differences of kind with differences of degree. "The result of this identification is that every form, so far as it is low in the scale, is to that extent an imperfect or inadequate specification of the generic essence, which is realized with progressive adequacy as the scale is

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[50]*The Principles of Art*, 285.
[51]EPM, 35.
[52]EPM, 91.
[53]EPM, 57.
[54]EPM, 86.
[55]Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*, 17.

ascended."[56] This implies a difference between various forms in which the generic essence is embodied but, at the same time, a difference in the degree to which these forms embody it. Collingwood, as it were, rejects the logic of 'family likeness' because 'dialectical logic' does not recognize kind and degree or opposition and distinction to be mutually exclusive relations:

> The higher term is a species of the same genus as the lower, but it differs in degree as a more adequate embodiment of the generic essence, as well as in kind as a specifically different embodiment; it follows from this that it must be not only distinct from it, as one specification from another, but opposed to it, as a higher specification to a lower, a relatively adequate to a relatively inadequate, a true embodiment of the generic essence to a false embodiment; as true, it possesses not only its own specific character, but also that which its rival falsely claimed. The higher thus negates the lower, and at the same time reaffirms it: negates it as a false embodiment of the generic essence, and reaffirms its content, that specific form of the essence, as part and parcel of itself.[57]

It should now be clear that Collingwood's dialectic as understood here is both descriptive and *evaluative*. It is in many respects a re-working of the dialectical monism of Hegel whereby each phase, as the scale is ascended, becomes a new phase while at the same time becoming a more adequate expression of the concept. In its adherence to the idea of superior understanding this view of reality is not sufficiently hermeneutical because it implies a single historical progress leading to the present. However, in what follows I want to broaden the above remarks somewhat by presenting a very brief summary which will serve to highlight some of the general features of Collingwood's dialectic.[58]

Collingwood does not intend to apply the doctrine of a scale of forms only to concepts, but extends it to cover philosophical systems in general. Understood dialectically, philosophical systems are related to each other in a *connected series* so that each should be a modification of the one before.[59] Collingwood expressed this idea by appealing to the concept of process, by which he means: "processes are things which do not begin and end but turn into one another."[60] In the first instance, this does not necessitate that each modification must be a better one. Furthermore, the idea that there is an overlap between forms, which is what the idea of 'turning into' expresses, does not necessitate betterment. Yet with the addition of the idea that the forms themselves 'telescope' into each other producing a *culmination* betterment is what is implied. Each phase in the scale, therefore, sums up the whole scale to that point: "Wherever we stand in the scale, we stand at a culmination."[61] A dialectical scale is also *retrospective*; the later term in a relation makes explicit what was implicit in the earlier term: "terms A and B, in that order, are

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[56]EPM, 61.
[57]EPM, 88.
[58]I rely on Mink's article 'Collingwood's Historicism' for the following paragraph.
[59]NL, 9, 36.
[60]A, 97f.
[61]EPM, 89.

so related that B renders A necessary, 'presupposes' A as that out of which it develops."[62] And finally, a dialectical series is *not predictable*. A lower form does not determine its successor either logically or causally. Collingwood calls this the 'Law of Contingency': in a development of ABCD, "whether merely logical ... or temporal ... there is nothing in A to necessitate B; nothing in A+B to necessitate C; nothing in A+B+C to necessitate D."[63] It is tempting, according to L. Mink, to interpret this as meaning "that the earlier terms are necessary but not sufficient for the generation of the later." Yet contrary to Hegel's dialectic which, in Collingwood's view, was really an attempt to convert the development of phases into a theory of implication, thus taking away any understanding of the individual phase as it is *an sich*,[64] it means rather "that the earlier terms are *retrospectively and only retrospectively* both necessary and sufficient."[65] This means that Collingwood not only wants to safeguard the individuality of phases, but also offers no theory to predict changes from one form to the next; the logic of his dialectic disallows the idea that changes are the result of *conscious*, as opposed to deliberate, agency. As Mink asserts, "the element of necessity in such a series itself *comes into existence* and hence can in principle be known only retrospectively."[66] In recognising an irreducible contingency in the development of mind Collingwood realizes that there can be no finality, no appeal to a Hegelian absolute: "however far up the scale he goes, he never comes to an absolute end of the series, because by reaching this point he already comes in sight of new problems; ... he is always at a relative end."[67] What is essential and necessary, for Collingwood, is only "the necessity of thinking systematically."[68]

It is evident, therefore, that while the *Essay on Philosophical Method* is an example of an evaluative philosophy which advocates the pursuit of superior understanding, many of the general features of Collingwood's dialectic, for example, the concept of process and the idea that necessity can only be known retrospectively, do not require an appeal to betterment.

§ 3. Pluralism: The *Metaphysics*

Collingwood begins the section 'Metaphysics as an Historical Science' by listing three absolute presuppositions about causation: the Newtonian, 'some events have causes'; the Kantian, 'all events have causes'; the Einsteinian, 'no events have causes'. He then goes on to suggest that to ask 'Which of these absolute presuppositions is true?' is a nonsense question, because its logical

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[62]NL, 9. 43.
[63]NL, 9. 48.
[64]Collingwood, 'On the So-called Idea', 100.
[65]Mink, 'Collingwood's Historicism, 242, his emphasis.
[66]'Collingwood's Historicism', 242, his emphasis.
[67]EPM, 191. "Hegel, nailing to the counter in advance the lie that he regarded his own philosophy as final ..." *The Idea of Nature*, 174.
[68]EPM, 198.

efficacy does not depend on its being true but only on its being supposed. The metaphysician's task is simply to discover what presuppositions have in fact been made.[69] This indicates at once that Collingwood is not using the 'scale of forms' analysis as a structural principle. The idea of an ascending scale on which the presuppositions are evaluated, one a more adequate embodiment of the generic essence than the other, is not present. The metaphysician has a descriptive rather than evaluative role. As it stands, such a position suggests that the metaphysician merely makes a comparative study of absolute presuppositions noting resemblances and differences. It appears as if the problem of relativism prevented Collingwood from demonstrating any continuity between phases, believing they were merely successive. This is of course the received interpretation. Yet further into the book he says:

> The essential thing about historical 'phases' is that each of them gives place to another; not because one is violently destroyed by alien forces impinging on its fabric from without ... but because each of them while it lives is working at turning itself into the next... The metaphysician's business, therefore, when he has identified several different constellations of absolute presuppositions, is not only to study their likenesses and unlikenesses but also to find out on what occasions and by what processes one of them has turned into another.[70]

The appeal to a process which is 'turning itself into the next' is supplemented by the idea that the modification is a movement from the implicit to the explicit: "[o]ne phase changes into another because the first phase was in unstable equilibrium and had in itself the seeds of change, and indeed of that change."[71] There may be a suspicion that this 'concession' to the 'implicit-explicit' dialectic does actually presuppose the notion of superior understanding. Yet this suspicion can be removed if we cast our eyes upon a manuscript Collingwood wrote in preparation for the *Metaphysics*. The manuscript, entitled 'The Function of Metaphysics in Civilisation' (1937-38) uses the terminology of 'absolute presupposition' for the first time.[72] Part of the argument is concerned with the question whether our science is superior to Greek science. Collingwood questions this superiority in two ways. First, he points out that there is no real standard of comparison between them, though there exists a continuity and development. Greek science has prepared "a soil out of which we moderns are winning our harvests;" therefore "is not the richness of these harvests a proof, not of our superiority to the ancients, but of the excellence of their pioneering work?"[73] Secondly, he questions whether the ability to decide between Greek and modern science can have any meaning, because we are not in a position to *choose* between our

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[69]*An Essay on Metaphysics*, 51f.
[70]EM, 73.
[71]EM, 74.
[72]But see IN, 30. However, this may not be the earliest because, according to Knox's 'Prefatory Note', this mention of 'absolute presupposition' occurs in a section Collingwood rewrote in 1939.
[73]"The Function of Metaphysics', 36. Bodleian, dep. 19/7

science and Greek science. To ask such a question is to ask "a nonsense question", because "to ask it presupposes the existence of a situation which does not exist."[74] While this last point obviously echoes the character of an absolute presupposition's logical efficacy, it also discloses Collingwood's agnosticism with regard to historical progress and his attitude to the past in general: "we are not called upon to choose it or reject it, to like it or to dislike it, to approve it or to condemn it, but simply to accept it."[75] There is, in other words, something irreducible about the past which cannot be subordinated to the status of a critical moment within an all-inclusive system.

This resort to a development of 'absolute presuppositions' from which an appeal to superior understanding is removed echoes the ideas Collingwood had earlier advanced against Spengler and the idea of progress in history. In the article 'A Philosophy of Progress' (1929) Collingwood anticipates his rejection of the scale of forms analysis as applied to history. In his view, because every age has its own uniqueness, "it is idle to assess [each] in terms of a *scale of degrees*."[76] Thus, it would appear as if the linear model of development on which critics interpret Collingwood's philosophy is too blunt an instrument to capture with sufficient clarity the real particularity of his thought. There is, in other words, not a single line of development, but at least one permanent branch line to Collingwood's philosophy which though disused (until now) was but awaiting discovery. This means that there is a creative tension in Collingwood's philosophy, with on the one side, an emphasis on a unity of superior understanding in systematic philosophy, and on the other an emphasis on plurality when exploring the conditions of historical existence. Yet both the monistic and pluralistic aspects are enveloped within a developmental process. This is most clearly seen when Collingwood contrasts atomism with pluralism in his article on Spengler: the ability to re-think for ourselves the thoughts of past cultures "destroy[s] the idea of atomic cultures, and ... assert[s] not a mere plurality of cultures but a unity of that plurality, a unity which is the present culture, the heir of all its past."[77] Thus, while he rejects the application of superior understanding to historical existence, Collingwood's commitment to the development of cultures whereby each 'turns into the next' tempers his pluralism and shows that he still adheres to the thesis of the oneness of time. This thesis of a single historical process (not progress), while removed from any commitment to betterment does retain, in common with Gadamer's work, an adherence to that continuity necessary to hermeneutics.

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[74]'The Function of Metaphysics', 37.
[75]'The Theory of Historical Cycles', 85.
[76]'A Philosophy of Progress', 111, my emphasis.
[77]OS, 71.

§ 4. A Critique of Rubinoff

We are now in a position to explain why Rubinoff's impressive discussion of Collingwood is nonetheless inadequate.

Rubinoff's massive study entitled, *Collingwood and the Reform of Metaphysics* (1970) is an attempt to undermine the view that Collingwood's philosophy exhibits a radical conversion from idealism to complete relativism which is said to have occurred between 1936 and 1938. He wants to show that there is no thorough-going discontinuity in Collingwood's thought and that a search for systematic unity provides the bridge between the earlier and later work. In this respect Rubinoff's book and Mink's *Mind, History, and Dialectic* (1969) which together disclose the central importance of the concept of dialectic are very valuable works. Yet Rubinoff goes further claiming that *all* of Collingwood's later work can be seen "as a projection of the programme outlined in *Speculum Mentis*"[78] Thus, in his view, the scale of forms analysis implicit in *Speculum Mentis* and made explicit in the *Essay on Philosophical Method* is the central key to an understanding of the *Metaphysics*: "It is my contention that the doctrine of [absolute presuppositions] ... is an unfortunate and misleading attempt to expound, in neutral language, the implications of the dialectical logic as set forth in *Speculum Mentis* and *An Essay on Philosophical Method*."[79] Yet I do not believe that Rubinoff is correct in this judgement. As I have shown Collingwood did not use a scale of forms analysis in the *Metaphysics*; his task was not to show the superiority of one complex of absolute presuppositions over against another, but simply to show that intellectual innovation depends upon them. In this sense, the *Metaphysics* is more descriptive in intention than evaluative. Rubinoff's work is, therefore, problematic on two counts: in the first place, it is unquestionably the case that at work in Rubinoff is the belief that Collingwood's credibility as a philosopher can be established only by showing that his *oeuvre* is expressive of a single system. The attempt "to reconstruct Collingwood's philosophy into a system"[80] using the scale of forms dialectic converts him into a Hegelian, bringing to mind Collingwood's critical observation: "German philosophers, when they die, it has been said, go to Oxford."[81] By this move, Rubinoff obliterates the real tension in Collingwood's work and perpetuates the 'Hegelian' label which is a substitute for the real task of interpretation. In attempting to rebut the suggestion of a radical conversion in Collingwood's later philosophy, Rubinoff seizes, too hastily in my view, upon the scale of forms analysis and in so doing obscures Collingwood's sensitivity to the past as it is in itself. By placing the emphasis on Collingwood's monism, which I do not doubt, Rubinoff is blind to the particularity that is

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[78]Rubinoff, *Collingwood and the Reform*, 27.
[79]CRM, 237.
[80]CRM, v.
[81]'The Metaphysics of F. H. Bradley', Bodleian, dep. 29.

characteristic of Collingwood's historical sense. To echo Knox (without implying agreement with his conclusions), Collingwood's writings make up not so much one system as a series of systems.[82] The absence of a scale of forms analysis in the *Metaphysics* does not, in other words, necessitate a return to Knox's thesis of historical relativism. While this is perhaps the implication of Rubinoff's argument, I believe that the *Metaphysics* is about something else (what it is about will be explained in more detail below). Secondly, Rubinoff's exclusive emphasis on the 'scale of forms' obscures Collingwood's view of dialectical themes not dependent on the idea of superior understanding.

§ 5. Knox: Too Loyal a Friend?

After Collingwood's death in 1943 it was decided that his collected papers, including the lectures on nature, moral philosophy, history and the unfinished *Principles of History*, would be published together with a memoir written by someone who was sympathetic to him.[83] A degree of hostility still existed in Oxford, due mainly to the views of the *Autobiography*,[84] but it was hoped that someone could be found who would not use the memoir as an opportunity to get back at Collingwood. As a devoted disciple and friend, Knox was believed to be the best choice. For his part, Knox saw it as his duty to edit Collingwood's work and write the memoir. What is now the preface to (the first edition of) *The Idea of History* should be seen as an attempt not merely to save Collingwood from possible oblivion, but also to place him within a wider context of thought by outlining some of his major ideas which at that time were not widely known. In this respect Knox's preface became very influential and the starting-point for subsequent interpretations.[85]

It was Knox's involvement that was the decisive factor in preventing the publication of all but a small number of manuscripts. Furthermore, he made it clear that he would be critical as well as appraisive of Collingwood.[86]

The fall into historical relativism which supposedly afflicts Collingwood's later work was, according to Knox, the result of ill-health.[87] It is true that Collingwood's last years were grievous to his friends. His frequent strokes took away his strength and speech; this must have been particularly difficult for those who knew him as "one of the most learned men of his generation"[88] Ill-health, then, becomes a convenient way of accounting for supposed lapses in his thought. Thus, Knox thinks the *Essay on Philosophical Method* expressive of the summit of

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[82]Knox, IH, vii.
[83]For an excellent account of this see D. Boucher's '*The Principles of History*', 140-74.
[84]There was also the scandal surrounding his divorce. See Boucher, 144.
[85]See van der Dussen's 'Introduction' to the revised ed. of IH, esp. xixf.
[86]Boucher, 144.
[87]Knox, IH, xxi.
[88]Back cover to IN, paperback edition, 1960.

Collingwood's powers, because it was composed in a period untouched by ill-health. Van der Dussen, however, has shown that the essay on *Method* was written after a period of serious illness not before, and "this fact seriously weakens [Knox's] suggestion that Collingwood's judgement was marred by his illness."[89] Furthermore, *The New Leviathan*, published in the year before his death, is not criticized on the grounds that its judgement is marred; nor does it exhibit any lapse into thorough-going relativism. Yet more importantly for us: the re-appearance of the scale of forms analysis in *The New Leviathan* puts an immovable question-mark against the thesis that Collingwood had abandoned it.

A further point on which Knox must be challenged concerns his rejection of Collingwood's claim that the elaboration of metaphysics as an historical science of absolute presuppositions precedes 1936.[90] The seeds of such an approach are apparent from an early stage. In 'Ruskin's Philosophy' (1919) Collingwood declares:

> you generally find that there are certain central principles which [a] man takes as fundamental and incontrovertible, which he assumes as true in all his thinking and acting. These principles form, as it were, the nucleus of his whole mental life: they are the centre from which all his activities radiate ... But for the most part we do not know that we possess it: still less do we know what are the convictions which constitute it. The fact seems to be that a man's deepest convictions are precisely those which he never puts into words. Everything which he says and does is based upon his grasp of these convictions; but just because his grasp of them is so complete, so unquestioning, he never finds it necessary to express them at all.[91]

The idea of a nucleus of principles is carried over into Collingwood's philosophy of religion. The rubric *fides quaerens intellectum* is re-interpreted as 'Reason is Faith Cultivating Itself' (1927); faith is that which achieves self-conscious possession of its own reality. Again in the article 'Faith and Reason' (1928), faith, in Collingwood's view, "is the knowledge that the universe as a whole is rational. It is only because we know that this is so, that we can be certain of finding in this or that detail of it a fit and possible object of scientific study."[92] It is the nature of this self-authentication and its scientific consequences that forms the subject of Collingwood's early appeal to absolute presuppositions. In 1934 Collingwood delivered two lectures on metaphysics under the title 'The Nature of Metaphysical Study'. The second of these lectures is concerned with the question: "What are the problems with which metaphysics has specially to concern itself in European countries towards the middle of the twentieth century?"[93] (Note the historical and geographical specificity of the question.) It is in answer to this question that the notion of absolute presuppositions is suggested. After noting the two basic principles of seventeenth

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[89]Van der Dussen, IH, xxi.
[90]Knox, IH, x.
[91]'Ruskin's Philosophy', 10f.
[92]'Faith and Reason', 141.
[93]'The Nature', 15, Bodleian, dep. 18/2.

century science: (1) "that nature works according to fixed and definite laws"; and (2) "that things in nature are really measurable and that whatever is not measurable is not real"[94], he comments:

> These two principles are the assumptions on which 17th century natural science rested, and if that science was to be regarded as real knowledge of the real world these assumptions must be true. But obviously physical science could not prove their truth; it could only begin to use its own methods when they had been assumed. Their truth was a matter for investigation by metaphysics.[95]

It is evident that the account developed above bears a striking resemblance to the later doctrine of absolute presuppositions. The difference is that here, while the metaphysician is in the business of proving the assumptions of natural science, in the *Metaphysics* this task is rejected.[96]

Knox appeals to Collingwood's declaration about the uselessness of asking whether Augustine's view of Roman history was correct and quotes Collingwood's note that 'philosophy as a separate discipline is liquidated by being converted into history' to sustain the idea that after 1936 Collingwood acquiesced in a thorough-going relativism, but neither statements necessarily carry these connotations. In the first place, in the new edition to *The Idea of History* van der Dussen has cast doubt on the status of the passage concerning 'point of view' in history. Knox says this came from a manuscript written in 1936, but when questioned by van der Dussen, presumably because the passage could not be found, Knox said Collingwood had written it in a letter to him. However, to van der Dussen's surprise, the passage does not appear in any of the letters from Collingwood to Knox deposited in St. Andrew's University Library.[97] But be that as it may, van der Dussen also cites a passage from Collingwood suggesting that the appeal to point of view does not reduce history to something wholly subjective: "Everyone brings his own mind to the study of history, and approaches it from the point of view which is characteristic of himself and his generation ... this does not reduce history to something arbitrary or capricious. It remains genuine knowledge."[98] Thus, while every age is subject to the limitations of its own historical context, this does not rule out the possibility of an authentic sort of response. The focus on 'point of view' is, I suspect, meant to suggest that each age understands the same reality in different ways. So perhaps the citation of the passage on 'point of view' says more about Knox than Collingwood: does Knox harbour thoughts of the possibility of unconditional knowledge? Does he, in other words, think our contextual limitations somehow a *failure* on our part?

The passage about the liquidation of philosophy is, I believe, characteristic of Collingwood's thought from the first. It is important to note that what is liquidated is philosophy *as a separate*

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[94]'The Nature', 17.
[95]'The Nature', 17f.
[96]EM, 173.
[97]Van der Dussen, IH, xxiif.
[98]Collingwood, 'The Philosophy of History', 1930, 15. Cited in van der Dussen, IH, xxii, n. 15.

discipline.[99] This is, I think, an example of the *rapprochement* between philosophy and history that Collingwood had always pursued. Consider, for example, the following passage from Collingwood's manuscript 'The Philosophy of the Christian Religion' written in 1920:

> It may be said in reply that I have done nothing but decry philosophy and praise history as a substitute. But this is not so. I have claimed that philosophy, to be properly fruitful, must study its own history and understand the growth of its own present problems before it can successfully solve them; and that in this way it is more likely to solve them than if it abstracts them from their historical setting and regards them - quite falsely and most discouragingly - as *permanent* problems, which all past philosopher's have tried to solve and failed. The philosophy of today has its own problems: these problems have been raised by the process of philosophical thought itself: grasp the history of the problem, and then you will be in the best position to offer a solution.[100]

The point is that philosophy is not dispensed with altogether; it is, as it were, interwoven with history. Philosophy, in other words, must become self-consciously historical. This passage, then, shows that such a programme, which presupposes that philosophical questions and their answers cannot be abstracted from their historical context - because they are embodied in and constitutive of their context - is characteristic of Collingwood's philosophy from the beginning and must not be appealed to as a position to which he finally succumbed.[101]

Consequently, Knox's privileged position as the editor and interpreter of Collingwood's writings while fortuitous did in fact conspire against a more balanced assessment of Collingwood's philosophy. Knox's tendency to place the emphasis on systematic philosophy, obscuring the pluralistic nuances of Collingwood's historical sense, reveals a man not merely trying too hard to protect the reputation of a teacher and friend but also one who substitutes his own views for Collingwood's. The adoption of ill-health as a causal principle of alleged historical relativism is, therefore, in many respects a smoke screen used either to disguise a subtle disagreement between Knox and Collingwood on the question of the nature of philosophy or Knox's inability to understand his teacher.[102] Like Rufinus' translation of Origen's *De Principiis*, Knox expended too much love and not enough labour.

So in conclusion: it is apparent that Collingwood's philosophy partakes of monism and pluralism. It is not, therefore, a matter of interpreting his thought along a linear line of development which can only either affirm a radical conversion or an enforced continuation. In other words, the *Essay on Philosophical Method* is not the measure of Collingwood's philosophy

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[99]My attention was drawn to this by M. Hinz's, 'Process and Progress', 125.
[100]Collingwood, 'The Philosophy of the Christian Religion', Bodleian, dep. 1/5, his emphasis.
[101]The parallels between Collingwood and A. MacIntyre are significant in this respect. See esp. Ch. 1 of MacIntyre's *A Short History*.
[102]It could also have something to do with Knox's suggestion (in a letter to Grace Simpson in 1974) that contrary to his public view, privately he blamed Kathleen, Collingwood's second wife, for what he perceived to be Collingwood's change in personality and direction of thought. See Boucher '*The Principles of History*', 145.

as a whole; it is but one component, albeit an extremely important one. It is also clear that an appeal to a development between the phases of a process, whether absolute presuppositions, cultural systems or concepts, is common to both monistic and pluralistic aspects of his thought. Yet Collingwood's sensitivity towards the uniqueness of the past allowed him to break free of Hegel's dialectical monism and reject the idea of superior understanding which follows from the assumption of the progressive realization of a genus.

(III)

Groundwork for Collingwood's Hermeneutics

§ 1. The Nature of Absolute Presuppositions

Before proceeding to investigate the controversial notion of 'unconscious thought' it would now be useful to say something about the nature of absolute presuppositions because they point to a recognition on Collingwood's part of the fallacy of the search for Cartesian 'foundations'.

In the first place, I believe the phrase 'absolute presuppositions' was suggested to him by a reading of Bradley's essay 'The Presuppositions of Critical History'. Collingwood made a study of Bradley (beginning in 1932[103]) which culminated in the lectures on metaphysics (1934), a critical account of Bradley's essay on history which formed the basis for Collingwood's Inaugural Lecture on the 'Historical Imagination' (1935), and a section on Bradley in the lectures on the idea of history (1936). Reflection on the logical relation between method and presupposition pervades Bradley's essay on critical history. He writes: "Science, we may be told in answer, is founded on experiment and not on a presupposition. The fact of the existence of scientific experiment proves, we must return, the existence of an *absolute presupposition*, which it can be said to found, only because upon that itself is [it] already founded."[104]

Secondly, this emphasis on the relation between scientific method and presupposition characterizes the important work of M. B. Foster. In an article published in *Mind* (1934) entitled, 'The Christian Doctrine of Creation and the Rise of Modern Natural Science', Foster demonstrates that classical physics depends for its existence on the doctrine of God. He declares: "What we have attempted to show is that the method of natural science depends upon the presuppositions which are held about nature, and the presuppositions about nature in turn upon the doctrine of God."[105] Though Collingwood worked independently on these themes prior to

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[103]A copy of Bradley's essay was sent to Collingwood by the philosopher Joseph. In a letter to Joseph, dated 15 July 1932, Collingwood writes: "It is good of you to have lent me this rarity, which I have long wanted to see and have never seen before." See Dussen, IH, 437.

[104]Bradley, 'The Presuppositions', 21, my emphasis. J. S. Boys-Smith, then, was perhaps correct to see in this essay a sketch of the later presuppositions of the British Idealists. See MacKinnon, 'Some Aspects', 56.

[105]Foster, 'The Christian Doctrine of Creation', 465. Today this claim about the doctrine of God is not anything to be proud of. Lash, who has distilled the insights of Michael J. Buckley and Amos

1934, it is difficult to discount that he knew of Foster's work and took careful note of it. Foster himself refers approvingly to Collingwood's *Metaphysics* and *The Idea of Nature* in his own later work.[106]

This suggests that reflection upon the interplay between presupposition and method is what Collingwood has in mind when he talks of metaphysics as an historical science. But this equation of metaphysics with the absolute presuppositions of different cultural systems is, in my view, to limit metaphysics unnecessarily. While it is true to say that there is little agreement on a common definition of metaphysics,[107] by tying metaphysics to temporal development, Collingwood obscures our view of those fundamental categories and basic concepts "which," as P. Strawson declares, "in their most fundamental character, change not at all."[108] There is, in other words, a 'natural history' of basic concepts in the Wittgensteinian sense: that is, a synopsis of basic categories which are *shown* by analysis rather than arranged as a series in time. This conception of metaphysics, which in essence rejects temporal development, while anathema to Collingwood, gives the concept of analogy a valid place in metaphysical inquiry. That is to say, while I cannot follow Collingwood in his rejection of the idea of a valid science of the basic ways in which things are, I nonetheless take to heart his polemic against the view that metaphysics is a theoretical knowledge of objects: analogy is not a method, but a comment on our use of certain words.

I therefore agree with Tariq Modood when he suggests that the *Metaphysics* is best understood as an account of the logic of the history of ideas;[109] or as I prefer, the logic of intellectual innovation. For Modood the *Idea of Nature* and the *Metaphysics* form a unity, because their structure is not appropriate to a scale of forms analysis. This contradicts Knox's statement in his 'Prefatory Note' that Collingwood applied the scale of forms analysis to *The Idea of Nature*. But be that as it may, it is better to see the manuscript entitled 'Notes Toward a Metaphysic' (1933-34) as the treatise on Nature which betrays the influence of a scale of forms analysis. What Collingwood "drastically revised"[110] in September 1939 became *The Idea of Nature* and thus, while containing material from the earlier 'Notes', came within the orbit of Collingwood's preoccupation with absolute presuppositions. So Modood's insight is very shrewd.

Funkenstein into his most recent collection, shows that this God was not Christian i.e. not Trinitarian, but radically monotheistic and sovereign. See his *The Beginning*.

[106]James Connelly, Review of *Creation, Nature, and Political Order*, 230. It is also significant that Collingwood read Foster's *The Political Philosophies* for the Clarendon Press. Foster acknowledges Collingwood's help in the preface.

[107]See, for example, J. Kim, *A Companion to Metaphysics*, 310-12.

[108]Strawson, *Individuals*, 10.

[109]Modood, 'Collingwood and the Idea', 56f.; Skagestad, *Making Sense*, 82.

[110]Knox, 'Prefatory Note', IN.

In *The Idea of Nature* Collingwood offers an account of three analogies on which nature is understood: the analogy between macrocosm nature and microcosm man (Greek view of nature); the analogy between God's handiwork and the machines that are the handiwork of man (Renaissance view of nature); the analogy between processes of nature as studied in natural science and the processes of human affairs as studied by historians (modern view of nature). These three analogies are offered as presuppositions of nature. Now while they develop, Collingwood is not concerned with showing how each developed out of the last as a superior analogy. Furthermore, Collingwood uses the terminology found in the *Metaphysics*: "They [the Ionians] did not consciously treat it [the idea that everything is made from one substance] as a 'working hypothesis': [yet] it cannot be doubted that they accepted it as an absolute and unquestioned presupposition of all their thinking."[111] Together with the re-appearance of the scale of forms analysis in *The New Leviathan* this, I think, shows that Collingwood was really after demonstrating something which could not be done by a dialectic which leads to superior understanding.

Of course the immediate context of the *Metaphysics* is Collingwood's quarrel with A. J. Ayer's attempt in *Language, Truth and Logic* to eliminate metaphysics. Collingwood agrees with Ayer that the propositions of traditional metaphysics are unverifiable; but he does not fully endorse Ayer's view. Rather, the *Metaphysics* is an attempt to get round Ayer's elimination by, as it were, standing Ayer's argument on its head. Collingwood believes that Ayer's classification of all meaningful propositions into two exclusive classes, the analytic and the factual-empirical, is too restrictive. There is a third class which, though not verifiable, are not non-sensical either, because they are not propositions: "Absolute presuppositions are not propositions... the distinction between truth and falsehood does not apply to absolute presuppositions at all, that distinction being ... peculiar to propositions."[112] The thrust of Collingwood's argument is to show that Ayer's expulsion of metaphysics could be the root of the destruction of science and civilisation which, ironically, the latter's programme is meant to uphold. Ayer's verification principle and phenomenalism sought "to eliminate as metaphysical non-sense from scientific theories, any assumption of the unobservable."[113] All claims, in Ayer's view, must be verified at the bar of experience. By contrast, while not advocating a traditional approach to metaphysics, Collingwood sought to defend the spirit of that self-authentication which is characteristic of the metaphysical mind. So while there is a certain affinity between their two approaches - Ayer and Collingwood do after all in their own ways appear to reduce the metaphysical to something in the last resort, a matter of convention. Ayer by making the grammatical form of sentences the

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[111]IN, 30.
[112]EM, 32.
[113]MacKinnon, 'Ayer's Attack', 52.

measure of logical necessity, and Collingwood by resolving what is necessary into fundamental yet historical presuppositions - Collingwood saw in the interplay between faith and reason, an appropriate example of that metaphysical impulse which, as MacKinnon reminds us, "seeks to come to rest in that which cannot be rejected or modified, in that which is suffused with its own self-sufficiency ..."[114] What, in the end, differentiates Ayer from Collingwood was the former's impatience, so characteristic of the utilitarian, towards any resort to radical innovation which is born out of an appeal to self-authenticity. So that while the approaches of Ayer and Collingwood are similar in the way I have described, Collingwood sought to disclose the underlying nature of this self-authenticity which has unleashed those explosive intellectual forces, i.e. the Christian Church, classical physics, and inductive logic,[115] that characterize Western history. Armed with a belief in the 'logical priority' of absolute presuppositions, Collingwood thought Ayer's appeal to radical empiricism deeply damaging to the interests of science and civilisation; for is it not the case that an obsession with verification, with the need for positive evidence, imprisons intellectual innovation? And it was with the conditions of this intellectual innovation that Collingwood sought to engage in the *Metaphysics*:

> We do not acquire absolute presuppositions by arguing; on the contrary, unless we have them already arguing is impossible to us. Nor can we change them by arguing; unless they remained constant all our arguments would fall to pieces. We cannot confirm ourselves in them by 'proving' them; it is proof that depends on them, not they on proof. The only attitude towards them that can enable us to enjoy what they have given us (and that means science and civilisation, the life of rational animals) is an attitude of unquestioning acceptance. We must accept them and hold firmly to them; we must insist on presupposing them in all our thinking without asking why they should be thus accepted.[116]

Thus while Ayer wanted to place science under the complete control of sense-experience, Collingwood's appeal to that self-authentication which characterizes his understanding of the relation between faith and reason, sought to show that, in fact, neither the individual nor an appeal to experience can either exhaust our account of reality or provide the logical efficacy necessary for intellectual innovation. To presuppose does not limit the freedom of knowledge, but makes it possible. Absolute presuppositions, then, are not the result of scepticism (*pace* Knox and MacKinnon); rather, it is *rational* to presuppose *blindly*. Unlike Ayer, in other words, everything does not have to be under our control. This brings to mind Wittgenstein's assertion "Presuppositions come to an end."[117] This is precisely what Collingwood points to with his distinction between 'absolute' and 'relative' presuppositions.[118] In fact there are affinities between

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[114]'Ayer's Attack', 55.
[115]"Take away Christian theology, and the scientist has no longer any motive for doing what inductive thought gives him permission to do." IH, 255.
[116]EM, 173.
[117]Wittgenstein, in Kerr, *Theology*, 113.
[118]EM, 21-33.

Wittgenstein's description of the 'foundations' of a language game and absolute presuppositions.[119] However, what I want to bring out of this discussion is the idea that Collingwood was, to some degree, alive to the notion that has become central to hermeneutics (and theology): it is destructive to search for starting-points, because we can never begin at the beginning. He was in this respect appealing to the traditions which preserve and perpetuate the absolute presuppositions which provide the fertile soil of intellectual innovation.[120]

§ 2. Unconscious Thought: A Critique of Subjectivism

One of the questions Collingwood attempted to answer in the *Metaphysics* was how in the course of time absolute presuppositions change. Answering a friend who had asked him whether a change in absolute presuppositions was simply akin to a 'change in fashion' Collingwood, in a footnote, writes:

> A 'change of fashion' is a superficial change, ... A man adopts it merely because other men do so, or because advertisers, salesmen, etc., suggest it to him. My friend's formula 'if we like to start new dodges, we may' describes very well the somewhat frivolous type of consciousness with which we adopt or originate these superficial changes. But an absolute presupposition is not a 'dodge' and people who 'start' a new one do not start it because they 'like' to start it. People are not ordinarily aware of their absolute presuppositions, and are not, therefore, thus aware of changes in them: such a change, therefore, cannot be a matter of choice. [Absolute presuppositions change *via*] a modification not consciously devised but created by a process of unconscious thought.[121]

Interpreters have seized upon this passage as evidence that Collingwood was forced to introduce the idea of 'unconscious thought' because he could not account for change in rational terms: because we are not usually aware of our absolute presuppositions, a change in them could not be rationally devised by us. Both Knox and Donagan suggest, therefore, that Collingwood had to resort to psychology in order to explain how change occurs. For Knox, this means the doctrine of absolute presuppositions approximates to Dilthey's thesis that the philosophy a man adopts depends on his psychological make-up.[122] According to Donagan, Collingwood "interprets changes in what is presupposed along the lines of Freudian morbid psychology."[123] The

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[119]"Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end; - but the end is not certain propositions' striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting*, which lies at the bottom of the language-game." *On Certainty* § 204, his emphases. Collingwood's attitude to moral experience expresses similar sentiments about action: Moral philosophy's "purpose is to enable you to improve your own practice; and its appeal is an appeal by confirmation or disproved by reference to your practical experience." 'Goodness, Rightness, Duty', Bodleian, dep. 8, 10. Despite these affinities, Fergus Kerr, that inquisitor *par excellence* of suspected dualism, reminds us that Wittgenstein's appeal to action was an attempt to rid us of the idea that our action depends on a web of beliefs taken for granted: we simply act. *Theology*, 112-17.

[120]EM, 196f.

[121]EM, 48.

[122]Knox, IH, xiiif.

[123]Donagan, *The Later Philosophy*, 271.

implication is: because absolute presuppositions are dependent upon psychological factors they cannot be criteriological or normative and so lead to complete relativism.

While I believe Donagan is right to point to the influence of Freud, I think we need to go a good deal further and suggest that a better account of what Collingwood means by 'unconscious thought' can be given if it is understood as 'tradition', and hence, in complete opposition to Knox, as a critique of subjectivism.[124]

When Collingwood uses the phrase 'unconscious thought' he is using it in a special sense: the sense that Freud refers to when he talks about 'preconscious thought'. In *The New Leviathan*, Collingwood's discussion of unconscious thought and preconscious thought is meant to disclose the idea that though something is unconscious this does not mean that it is ineffective: "As Freud says, 'We learn by the analysis of neurotic phenomena that a latent or unconscious idea is not necessarily a weak one': in other words, that its strength is by no means 'latent or unconscious', even if everything else about it may be so described."[125] Thus by preconscious is meant: "that which is latent but capable of becoming conscious ... The Preconscious is 'only unconscious in the descriptive sense, and not in the dynamic sense'."[126] By using the terminology of Freudian psycho-analysis, Collingwood points to the presence of a horizon in which the individual is always and already situated. To ask a question, in other words, is already to presuppose something that goes beyond the questioner. In this sense, to question is to respond, whether or not we are conscious that this is so. By making thinking dependent upon absolute presuppositions, Collingwood shows that we cannot think these presuppositions through in themselves. Consequently, the 'logical priority' of absolute presuppositions corresponds to the situation in which we are always and already placed. When we begin to think, therefore, we never begin at the beginning. On this basis, it is evident that when Collingwood writes that absolute presuppositions change by a process of unconscious thought, and that changes are not a matter of *choice*, he has in mind something very similar to Gadamer's distinction between judgements and prejudices. He declares: "In this kind of thinking, absolute presuppositions are certainly at work; but they are doing their work in darkness, the light of consciousness never falling on them. It is only by analysis that any one can come to know either that he is making any absolute presuppositions or what absolute presuppositions he is making."[127] The idea that necessity itself comes into existence which is central to his dialectic means, in other words, that change is unconscious in the sense that we can come to know it only retrospectively. It follows that changes in fundamental ideas are not always *consciously* effected by historical agents even though agents

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[124]It is indeed difficult to accuse Collingwood of appealing to a non-criteriological explanation in view of the fact that a major aim of the *Metaphysics* was to criticize non-criteriological explanations.
[125]NL, 5. 88.
[126]NL, 5. 9.
[127]EM, 43.

act deliberately. That Collingwood is, in this connection, thinking of the concept of tradition is evident from the following: "The continuity of a cultural tradition is *unconscious*; those who live in it need not explicitly be aware of its existence. The continuity of a tradition is a continuity of a force by which past experience affects the future; and this force does not depend on the conscious memory of those experiences."[128]

§ 3. Concluding Remarks

While I have, perhaps, left this discussion at a tantalizing stage, I have achieved what I set out to do. The monistic and pluralistic aspects of Collingwood's philosophy have been outlined and the hermeneutical ideas of tradition and the rejection of superior understanding have been indicated. It is the purpose of Chapter 6 to carry the discussion forward by attempting to systematize Collingwood's ideas on hermeneutics using Gadamer's work as the measure. In particular, I shall go on to show that the rejection of superior understanding and the treatment of tradition as unconscious thought bear directly upon Gadamer's famous thesis of 'effective-history'.

This work, however, cannot be undertaken without the mediation of the next four chapters. While hermeneutics is a major concern of the thesis, the historical intention of Collingwood's philosophy cannot be by-passed. This is why the chapters on re-enactment, causation and historical inference are necessary components of the argument. To the task of outlining this historical intention we now turn.

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[128]Collingwood, *Roman Britain and the English Settlements*, 252, my emphasis.

CHAPTER TWO

Inadequate Accounts of Re-enactment

Introduction

The doctrine of re-enactment is central to the interpretation of Collingwood's philosophy of history. The doctrine is discussed by Collingwood in *The Idea of History* in the section 'History as Re-enactment of Past Experience', and in *An Autobiography* in the chapter 'History as the Self-Knowledge of Mind'. Recently interpretations by M. H. Nielsen and Dray have taken into consideration the important lectures Collingwood delivered between 1926-28 in which the doctrine of re-enactment is first discussed.[1] These lectures are on deposit in the Bodleian Library, but since 1993 they have become generally available following the publication of a new edition of *The Idea of History* under the editorship of van der Dussen.[2] Outlined above are the texts that specially deal with the doctrine of re-enactment. It would, however, be a mistake to assume that one could achieve a proper grasp of the doctrine by consulting these texts in isolation. In the past Collingwood's critics gave more attention to the Epilegomena of *The Idea of History* than to Collingwood's outline of history in its development, unaware that his account of the rise of history contained details essential to the interpretation of re-enactment and related ideas. A further complication is that *The Idea of History* was never written as a book, but is a 'scissors-and-paste' affair that includes studies spanning the years 1935-40. As I have shown, Knox's design of *The Idea of History* was motivated by his attempt to rescue Collingwood's personal and philosophical reputation. This gives us the book we know today: it is a selection, bound together with the appearance of a systematic treatise, that supposedly gives us Collingwood at his best. But for all that, the book itself is an interpretation, probably the first, of Collingwood's philosophy of history. Had he lived, Collingwood's own book would have been different. It is not open to us to judge what, in Collingwood's hands *The Idea of History* would have looked like. Gradually, however, due to the important work of the Collingwood Society in co-operation with Oxford University Press and Collingwood's daughter Mrs. Teresa Smith, some details are emerging. The first thing to realize is that the title is an interpretative clue, going some way to resolve certain problems. David Boucher under the auspices of the Collingwood Society, has, in drawing upon information contained in the *Oxford University Gazette*, made it clear that, in some respects at least, *The Idea of Nature* and *The Idea of History* form a unity of argument.[3] It is to be remembered that both books were originally a series of lectures. Boucher confirms that the

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[1]Nielsen, 'Re-enactment and Reconstruction'; Dray, 'Was Collingwood an Historical Constructionist?'
[2]*The Idea of History*, 1993, (ed.) van der Dussen. The previously unpublished lectures are, 'Preliminary Discussion. The Idea of a Philosophy of Something, and, in particular, a Philosophy of History', 1927, 'Lectures on the Philosophy of History', 1926, and 'Outlines of a Philosophy of History', 1928.
[3]Boucher, 'The *Principles of History*', 152f.

lectures on the idea of history immediately followed the lectures on the idea of nature. This allows Boucher to assert that the concluding sentence of *The Idea of Nature* preserves Collingwood's lecture form: "And that is why I answer the question, 'Where do we go from here?' by saying, 'We go from the idea of nature to the idea of history.'"[4] Collingwood credits A. N. Whitehead and S. Alexander with broadening the scope of historicity beyond its restriction to human affairs. Collingwood's own conception of his task in *The Idea of History*, is, therefore, to show that despite this supposed identity of all reality with history, there is a difference between nature and history to which the doctrine of re-enactment is an important heuristic key. It is clear, then, that a reading of the lectures on history, constituting parts I-IV of *The Idea of History*, are an essential contextualising device to further our understanding of re-enactment.

The relation between the lectures on nature and history is made more explicit when Collingwood's essay entitled 'Reality as History' is brought into the picture. This essay, to be found in his unpublished manuscripts, was written "to test how far the thesis can be maintained that all reality is history and all knowledge historical knowledge."[5] It was written in 1935 and concludes by distinguishing nature from history. Nature is not historical in the way mind is historical, because nature cannot conserve its own past, i.e. nature has a dead past. Collingwood wrote the original lectures on the idea of nature between August 1933 and September 1934. The lectures on the idea of history followed in 1936. Collingwood's essay from 1935, then, sits very well as a preliminary attempt to distinguish nature from history. This might seem a somewhat insignificant point, since it is well known that Collingwood distinguished between nature and history. Perhaps this may be granted, but my point is significantly different: because Collingwood understood both nature and history in terms of process, the problem was how history as process could be distinguished from the process of nature. It is at this juncture that the doctrine of re-enactment is crucial in establishing the difference. "My historical review of the idea of history has resulted in the emergence of an answer to this question: namely, that the historian must re-enact the past in his own mind."[6]History, unlike nature, has a past that lives on in the present: that is, historical consciousness is central to present action in a way knowledge of nature, with its dead past, can never be.[7]

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[4]Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature*, 177. Cited in Boucher, 154.
[5]'Reality as History', cited in van der Dussen *History as a Science*, 165.
[6]IH, 282. It is, of course, as an answer to the question, 'How, or on what conditions, can the historian know the past?' that the re-enactment doctrine is given. That said, my point is that bound up with the question of the condition for knowledge of the past is Collingwood's implicit distinction between nature and history.
[7]'Goodness', Bodleian, dep. 9, 75.

Turning our attention to the Epilegomena. we see that Knox's intention of providing a lasting testimony to Collingwood afforded him a reason to expand the Epilegomena. Its contents are as follows:

§ 1. Human Nature and Human History: published in 1936

§ 2. The Historical Imagination: published in 1935

§ 3. Historical Evidence: chapter one of *The Principles of History*. written in 1939

§ 4. History as Re-enactment of Past Experience: lectures of 1936

§ 5. The Subject-matter of History: lectures of 1936

§ 6. History and Freedom: part of chapter three of *The Principles of History*

§ 7. Progress as created by Historical Thinking: lectures of 1936.

It may be suggested that Knox acted with an honourable motive, but as so often in such situations there appeared unintended consequences. Principal among these is the distortion of Collingwood's projected desire to publish two books on history: the first concerning the idea of history, the second the principles of history.[8] The distinctive nature of these two projects must be taken seriously. Originally, Collingwood's lectures on the idea of history consisted of the historical sketch and only three sections of Epilegomena. In the original manuscripts which survive Collingwood pre-fixed the word Epilegomena with 'Metaphysical'.[9] What I contend is that sections 4, 5 and 7 of the Epilegomena are specifically concerned with the metaphysical aspect of history. By this I mean an investigation into the nature and reality of the objects of history. The essay on 'Historical Evidence' and to a certain extent the essay on 'Historical Imagination' that Knox included are out of place, since they are concerned to explore the methodological characteristics of history. Knox's way of grouping together both metaphysical and methodological texts, although in keeping with his intention, severely distorted the nature of the proposed thesis of *The Idea of History*. This thesis, as we have seen, embodied an attempt to distinguish history from nature in terms of re-enactment. In this light, the doctrine of re-enactment is an answer to a philosophical rather than empirical question: that is, re-enactment is an answer to the question of the possibility of historical knowledge as distinct from a knowledge of nature *qua* process.

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[8]Knox's contention that *The Principles of History* was not good enough to warrant publication because it was supposedly written in Collingwood's later hand i.e. was, in style and temper, out of key with his earlier work, makes a reading of Collingwood's note on the PH a very sad affair: "To E. W. C. [Ethel, Collingwood's first wife] if this MS comes into your hands and I am prevented from finishing it, I authorize you to publish it with the above title, with a preface by yourself explaining that it is a fragment of what I had, for 25 years at least, looked forward to writing as my chief work."

[9]'Lectures on the Philosophy of History.' 1936. There remain only 24 or so pages of this manuscript. Knox left a note upon the fragments indicating the type of editing he carried out: 'Passages from the Ms. of the Idea of History, either not used or used in a different form in the published work.' However, there remains a table of contents for Collingwood's 'Metaphysical Epilegomena'. Bodleian, dep 15.

This questioning of Knox's editing is important, since it establishes a certain distance between Collingwood and Knox. In the past, the structure of *The Idea of History* went unquestioned and so obscured the important role Knox played in its constitution. Not only was his preface deemed authoritative, but his selection of texts for the Epilegomena encouraged vastly inaccurate interpretations of Collingwood's philosophy of history. In the first place, Knox selected texts from different places and different times. Secondly, he grouped together methodological and metaphysical texts which obscured the true bearing of the doctrine of re-enactment. As a consequence, though the doctrine of re-enactment received prominence, it was gained through a methodological interpretation. This is not, of course, surprising in so far as history is by tradition concerned with method.

In Part I of this chapter I shall explore the main characteristics of re-enactment as an intuitive method. This will show that giving re-enactment a central methodological role demonstrates the distortion inherent in Knox's Epilegomena: that is, as method, re-enactment has no need, nor can it actually incorporate within itself, those parts of the Epilegomena that deal specifically with the method of history. The upholders of re-enactment as method actually oppose re-enactment to the reconstruction of the past in terms of evidence. This results in a polarisation of Collingwood's philosophy of history along two axes. On the first axis can be plotted the 'received' interpretation which sees re-enactment as an intuitive method.[10] On the other axis are those who either discuss Collingwood's theory as a series of elements, such as evidence and imagination, which remain isolated from one another,[11] or those who specifically adopted Collingwood's methodological ideas on evidence to their own projects while ignoring the doctrine of re-enactment.[12] Along the first axis, (I shall only deal with the first axis as it is the most significant), common to critics was the belief that historical explanation should be characterized by the use of general laws. The prejudice that the concept of explanation only extended to explanation by general laws meant that re-enactment was understood to be a species of intuition.

Part II of the chapter is concerned to demonstrate that the methodological interpretation of re-enactment was, in part, perpetuated by the vice-like grip of the general law thesis of explanation on the theory of history. The familiar idealist theme of the *autonomy* of history was suspect, because it seemed to give history over to a gnostic method for discovering the past. In the eyes of general law theorists the stress on autonomy masked a rejection of the need for a

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[10]Along this axis we find: P. Bagby, *Culture*; G. Buchdahl, 'Has Collingwood Been Unfortunate'; L. B. Cebik, 'Collingwood: Action'; L. J. Cohen, 'Has Collingwood'; W. B. Gallie, *Philosophy*; P. Gardiner, 'The Objects' and *The Nature*; M. Ginsberg, 'The Character of'; Austin van Harvey, *The Historian*; A. M. MacIver, 'The Character of', 1947; F. Olafson, *The Dialectic*; K. Popper, 'A Pluralist Approach'; G. J. Renier, *History*; P. Skagestad, *Making Sense of History*; A. Toynbee, *A Study of History*; Walsh, *Introduction* and 'The Character of'.

[11]See, for example, B. Lonergan, *Method*.

[12]Cebik, 'Collingwood: Action.'

logical analysis of explanation. If precision was required, then, it must be gained from the language of the natural sciences. It is in the adoption of explanation by general laws or what is now better know, following Dray's *Laws and Explanation in History* (1957), as the covering-law model of explanation, that there appears the deliberate eclipse of the concept of understanding in favour of the concept of explanation.[13] Understanding was believed to be an affective concept rather than something cognitive.[14] It had therefore to be rejected, since it was not amenable to measurement. What was needed, according to covering-law theorists, was a method which would establish the scientific credentials of history. The manifesto of this movement was Carl Hempel's paper, 'The Function of General Laws in History' (1942) which has a genealogy drawing upon Hume's understanding of 'regularity'. Central to Hempel's paper is the idea that explanation is both a general i.e. 'covering' term for all science, and a precise term denoting what is explainable. At stake in the plea for general laws, always the mainstream of European philosophy at least since Aristotle, was a concern for the unity of science. The return of history from what was seen as its self-imposed idealist exile was conditional upon the assumption that history is part of a system of the sciences which speaks always of kinds rather than of individuals.[15]

I seek to show that the collapse of the covering-law model contributes to a new interpretation of re-enactment. In this light, the autonomy of history was a thesis that sought to rebut general law logic by pointing out that history is a science of the individual and not a science of kinds. It is as a logical contribution to this discovery that re-enactment should be understood. It was, ironically, the school of analytical philosophy which recognized the logical status of re-enactment. This is important because it testifies to the breaking up of the covering-law model in the interests of *historical* explanation.[16]

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[13]Collingwood recognizes no difference between the two terms, understanding being what explanation typically yields, and explanation what understanding typically requires. See Dray, *History as Re-enactment*, 35; IH, 176-77.

[14]This devaluing of supposedly affective concepts such as empathy has its counterpart within continental hermeneutics. The difference, however, is that in the work of Gadamer and Ricoeur understanding becomes divorced from affective concepts.

[15]While recognizing history's appeal to the 'individual' judgement, Schopenhauer nevertheless declares it contradictory: "History lacks the fundamental characteristic of science, namely the subordination of the objects of consciousness; all it can do is to present a simple co-ordination of the facts it has registered. Hence there is no system in history as there is in the other sciences ... The sciences, being systems of cognitions, speak always of kinds; history always of individuals. History, therefore, would be a science of individuals, which implies a self-contradiction." Cited in IH, 167.

[16]By indicating that it is impossible to ask 'What is history?' without answering other questions of the type 'What such an inquiry is about?', 'How it proceeds?', and 'What is it for?' (IH, 7), Collingwood shows that his point of departure is history as an on-going discipline. Consequently, R. Martin and R. F. Atkinson, two philosophers who share this point of departure and identify it with analytical philosophy of history, see Collingwood as both an early exponent of analytical philosophy of history and its "intellectual founder." (R. Martin, Review of van der Dussen's *History*, 75, and Atkinson, *Knowledge and Explanation*, x.) At stake in the discussion of more contemporary analytical philosophers, including

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Re-enactment as Historical Method: A False Approach

§ 1. Introduction

In this part my main concern is to bring to light the principle which supports the intuitive interpretation of re-enactment. As a species of intuition, re-enactment is understood to be a method whereby the historian comes to know the thought of an historical agent by attributing, *via* an act of intuitive insight, his own thought to the agent. There is no appeal to an inferential process. Rather, by placing himself in the position of the agent, the historian, by the use of analogous reasoning, assumes an identity between his own thoughts and those of the agent. Hereafter I shall refer to this approach as the intuitive interpretation. There will be no sustained criticism of this interpretation in this part. I shall note in passing, however, that the intuitive interpretation is obsolete so far as informed interpretation goes. That might seem to indicate that any detailed analysis of the intuitive interpretation is unnecessary, but this is very far from being the case. Even though I offer a brief outline of re-enactment prior to a more detailed treatment, the real focus of this part is upon the principle underlying the intuitive interpretation, precisely because it is so embedded within the critique of re-enactment that it still functions after the intuitive interpretation is rejected.

§ 2. The 'Outside-Inside' Metaphor

Before proceeding to the intuitive interpretation of re-enactment a few remarks are required in order to provide the barest of frameworks which helps situate the doctrine of re-enactment. The principal text for the interpretation of re-enactment is as follows:

> The historian, investigating any event in the past, makes a distinction between what may be called the outside and the inside of an event. By the outside of the event I mean everything belonging to it which can be described in terms of bodies and their movements: the passage of Caesar, accompanied by certain men, across a river called the Rubicon at one date, or the spilling of blood on the floor of the senate-house at another. By the inside of the event I mean that in it which can only be described in terms of thought: Caesar's defiance of Republican law, or the clash of constitutional policy between himself and his assassins. The historian is never concerned with either of these to the exclusion of the other. He is investigating not mere events (where by a mere event I mean one which has only an outside and no inside) but actions, and an action is the unity of the outside and inside of an event... His work may begin by discovering the outside of an event, but it can never end there; he must always remember that the event was an action, and that his main task is to think himself into this action, to discern the thought of its agent... But how does the historian discern the thoughts which he is trying to discover? There is only one way in which it can be done: by re-thinking them in his own mind.[17]

Dray, is the recognition, against covering-law theorists, that a different *concept* of explanation operates in history. (See Dray, HR, 75.) Collingwood is, therefore, seen as an ally in this discussion.

[17]IH, 213, 215. In Collingwood's terminology re-thinking is a synonym for re-enacting.

The above passage comes from Collingwood's paper entitled 'Human Nature and Human History' written following his election to the British Academy in 1934. Collingwood read the paper to the Academy on 20 May 1936.[18] It is another example of the logical link between Collingwood's lectures on nature and history. One of the central tenets of the lecture is his attempt to outline the subject-matter of history in contra-distinction from the natural sciences. The quoted passage comes from a section devoted to outlining the field of historical thought.[19] The delimiting of this field (this subject-matter) not only reflects the historian's task, it also puts into relief the methods of natural science. The main point of this delimiting of history is to show that the evolutionary conception of nature which might seem at first sight to have abolished the difference between natural process and historical process, and to have dissolved nature into history, is unwarranted. If there is a similarity between nature and history it proceeds from the use of an analogy between "the processes of the natural world as studied by natural scientists and the vicissitudes of human affairs as studied by historians."[20] Collingwood again alludes to this analogy in 'Human Nature and Human History' when comparing the archaeologist's and geologist's methods. The difference, however, is that archaeology, and by implication history, deal with human affairs which Collingwood conceives in terms of thought *qua* expressions of human purposes.[21] He points to this in so far as the historian's "special technique, depending as it does on the interpretation of documents in which human beings of the past have expressed or betrayed their thoughts, cannot be applied just as it stands to the study of natural processes."[22]The analysis of the historian's methodology is not, however, enough, since it is the scope of this method that is at issue.[23] What needs to be considered is the general nature of the problems this method is designed to solve. The text at issue is, then, Collingwood's attempt to demonstrate what it means to give an *historical* explanation.

The 'outside-inside' passage, however, cannot stand as an adequate sketch of historical explanation without seeing it within the context of Collingwood's remarks about evidence. These remarks, concerning the historian's 'special technique', contextualise the 'outside-inside' metaphor. The historian is inquiring into events that have finished happening. Access to these events is given through 'documents' that the historian interprets. In so far as the data of *events* are concerned, it seems as if the natural scientist and historian work in the same way: that is, like the scientist, the historian apprehends the 'outside' of the event. Observation appears to be the mode of inquiry. While this is readily understood in the case of the scientist, it cannot, except in a very limited

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[18]Knox. 'Preface', IH.
[19]What is surprising is that the text does not come from the specific section on re-enactment.
[20]IN, 9.
[21]IH, 212.
[22]IH, 212.
[23]IH, 213.

sense, refer to the historian's work. Collingwood's understanding of the 'outside' of an historical event expressed as 'the passage of Caesar, accompanied by certain men, across a river called the Rubicon...' is not an example of observation. The historian does not *see* the passage of Caesar at all. In other words, the historical event cannot be what is observed, which strengthens the *metaphorical* status of the 'outside-inside' metaphor. Yet observation does have a place, though not the place some might suspect. I want to draw upon what Collingwood has to say about evidence in the recently discovered manuscript *The Principles of History* in order to substantiate my claim. In the section entitled §3. 'Evidence and Language' (which is part of Chapter 2 entitled 'Action') Collingwood makes a distinction within evidence between 'what it says' and 'what it means'.[24] The emphasis on 'what it says' is, according to Collingwood, "an indispensable *pre-condition* to any science of historical method."[25] Collingwood is referring to the reading of a 'document' which "in its relation to history... can be defined as apprehending or discerning the evidence."[26] The pre-condition of history is fulfilled, in other words, if the historian has in his possession a 'document' from which 'what it says' can be read off. As Collingwood states: "the historian's business is to discover what somebody thought: in order to do that, he must first find out what he said (where 'saying' covers not only expressive movements of the speech-organs, but expressive action of whatever kind); and the way to find out what somebody said is to 'read' the notation of it, or a true copy of the notation of it, which you have before you."[27] The jurisdiction of the concept of observation in historical studies extends, therefore, only so far as the 'document' that the historian studies. Furthermore, the distinction between 'what it says' and 'what it means' provides a clue to the import of the 'outside-inside' metaphor. The discovery of the 'outside' of an event, i.e. the passage of Caesar across the Rubicon, provides only the precondition of historical explanation. Together with this 'outside', the historian is in search of the 'inside', i.e. Caesar's defiance of Republican law, which completes the historical inquiry. It is debatable, however, whether Collingwood, as a Roman historian, believed that Caesar's defiance of Republican law explains Caesar's action. For, as Dray comments, this was not Caesar's reason for acting but only a consequence of his action.[28] Collingwood in this instance has moved seamlessly from 'reason for action' to the 'significance of action'. Yet, as we shall see, this is not without importance, especially in view of the hermeneutical dimension of Collingwood's philosophy.

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[24]PH, 39. The manuscript was found and is housed in the archives of Oxford University Press, Oxford. The distinction between 'what it says' and 'what it means' is not meant as a provocation to the author of *The Blue and Brown Books* (35). Rather, it pertains to the distinction between 'source' and 'evidence'. See Chapter 5.
[25]PH, 42, his emphasis.
[26]PH, 42.
[27]PH, 42.
[28]Dray, HR, 47.

Thus the main point of the 'outside-inside' metaphor is to characterise the type of explanation historians typically give. This leads to a number of consequences especially in relation to natural science. There is an important change within the 'outside-inside' passage from a sole emphasis on events to an emphasis on actions. The historian, Collingwood asserts, "is investigating not mere events (where by a mere event I mean one which has only an outside and no inside) but *actions*, and an action is the *unity* of the outside and the inside of an event."[29] The correct way to understand the 'outside-inside' metaphor is to place it in the context of action rather than event. This is clear from the example Collingwood gives of Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon as the 'outside' of an action. The emphasis on action becomes the heuristic key which accounts for the difference between natural science and history. In the first instance, though both scientist and historian appear to be concerned with the 'outside' of an event the *direction* of their respective inquiries demonstrates the nature of their respective subject-matter. The scientist goes beyond the event only so far as to observe its relation to others, and to bring it under a general law of nature. This reveals that for the scientist, "nature is always and merely a 'phenomenon',... in the sense of being a spectacle presented to his intelligent observation."[30] This is an inadequate account of historical explanation, because the historian, when he has discovered the 'outside' of an action, in this case Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon, moves on to discern the thought (the 'inside') which this action expresses. A simple report of what happened, therefore, does not count as an explanation. To take an example from *The Principles of History*: the difference between geology and archaeology is that when the stratification of a rock formation or site is settled "the archaeologist has not got history [unlike the geologist, the archaeologist has not finished his inquiry]; he has only got a chronological and topographical framework within which history is to be constructed."[31] This suggests that Collingwood distinguished science from history in so far as the former classifies events while the latter explains events. This does not mean that science only asks 'what happened' type questions rather than 'why it happened' type questions. It means, I think, that when transferred to history a general law cannot function as an explanation. A general law, in Collingwood's view, can never adequately answer the question 'why did the agent do *x*?' but only 'why did the agent do an act of this *kind*?' But instead of making this clear in the above passage, Collingwood obscures his point by conflating 'what' type questions with 'why' type questions. He declares: "For the historian there is no difference between discovering what happened and discovering why it happened."[32] This paradox, while a typical piece of exaggeration on Collingwood's part, has its defenders. Mink, for example, thinks it basically

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[29]IH, 213, my emphases.
[30]IH, 214.
[31]PH, 50.
[32]IH, 214, 177.

sound, believing it to mean that a full description of an action is at the same time its explanation.[33] Yet this is to obliterate the logical distinction between 'what' happened and 'why' it happened. On the face of it this conflation reads: "When the historian knows that Caesar was advancing against his enemies in Rome, he already knows why Caesar was advancing against his enemies in Rome."[34] This is obviously false. Taking into account the context of the passage, it can only mean, it seems to me, that there are not two separate operations, one discovering facts and another applying causal laws, as positivism supposes. That is to say, the paradoxical conflation of 'what' with 'why' is useful, because history does not simply collate facts and then apply extraneous general laws to explain the facts; history, according to Collingwood, has a causal logic of its own. The agent's action, in other words, is 'determined' by the agent's beliefs and intentions not by a determining antecedent event.

The emphasis on action loosens the definitiveness of the concept of 'event' and, as it were, subverts any allusion to observation. In other words, Collingwood is speaking metaphorically, and demonstrating that the historian does not observe at all. That is to say, the difference is *not* one of a move 'inward' in history to the move 'beyond' in science. The metaphor applies only to history conceived as action. This is not, then, understood as an empirical separation of the physical and mental, but as a unity of action and thought understood as 'purposive action'. This has consequences for a determination of the object of history. The scientist working with the concept of observation presupposes the object, the historian re-enacts it. The historical object "is therefore not an *object* at all."[35] It follows, then, that a thought cannot be discovered without at the same time re-thinking it. By appealing to a term like 'discernment' Collingwood is, therefore, referring to an inferential process wholly independent of the natural scientist's reliance on the concept of observation.

In terms of historical explanation, Collingwood is attempting to make clear (although the history of the interpretation of 'outside-inside' metaphor demonstrates his failure) that history does not proceed *via* the classification of an event. It is not the events themselves that are central, but how these events are understood by the historical agents involved. Put simply, Collingwood is using the metaphor to show that general laws are neither sufficient nor necessary to the explanation of an historical action. The emphasis on thought is important, because it is the thought (intentions, motives, purposes) of an historical agent that *explains* an action. This is the point of distinguishing both the 'outside' of an action, i.e. Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon, from the 'inside', i.e. Caesar's defiance of Republican law, and an 'event' from an 'action'. The fact that

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[33]Mink, *Mind*, 189.
[34]Dray, HR, 49.
[35]Collingwood, 'Scheme for *The Principles of History*', his emphasis. Cited in van der Dussen, HS, Appendix I.

action forms the distinctive character of the historian's subject-matter, in Collingwood's view, makes the attempt to assimilate historical methodology to that of natural science misconceived in principle. But the appeal to metaphor shows that Collingwood, while not bound to the methodology of natural science, found it useful to parallel this methodology with that of history; and by this demonstration, whereby the resistance of the words (outside-inside) in their ordinary use reveals their incompatibility at the literal level,[36] puts the distinctive character of historical explanation in relief. Collingwood appeals to metaphor in order to describe a 'procedure' inaccessible to direct description as given by the methodology of natural science. And it is this 'procedure' that later analytical philosophers like Dray have re-described using the Neo-Wittgensteinian procedure of linguistic analysis.[37] In so doing Dray and others have given Collingwood's work a legitimacy it scarcely had, but surely deserves.

The 'outside-inside' metaphor is adopted, then, not to answer a question with regard to temporal distance which dissociates an 'inner' thought from its 'outer' shell (leaving the historian free to extract or re-enact this 'inside' unmoved by considerations of temporality), but rather to show the distinctive nature of historical explanation.

§ 3. Re-enactment as Intuition

The intuitive interpretation is the most well-known and persistent reading of the doctrine of re-enactment. Its power is formidable, because a reading of *The Idea of History* appears to lend itself to such an interpretation. Part of the problem is the language and the examples Collingwood uses to present his ideas. What far outweighs this problem, however, is the context within which Collingwood is placed. This, as I have already outlined, is the positioning of idealism with a discredited notion of 'understanding' by covering law theorists. Re-enactment becomes a synonym for literally 're-living' or 're-experiencing' the past. This context not only exacerbates the intuitive interpretation, but allows its confirmation.

In outlining the intuitive interpretation of re-enactment I shall draw upon the work of Patrick Gardiner, using his reading as representative of what might be called the 'methodological intuitionists'. Gardiner is an important choice, because his reading possesses a balance and clarity of argument absent from other critics.

Gardiner's intention in *The Nature of Historical Explanation* is to demonstrate that the only valid approach to the past consists in the adoption of explanation by general laws. His

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[36]At this point I am following Ricoeur: "The metaphor is alive as long as we can perceive, through the new semantic pertinence ... the resistance of the words in their ordinary use and therefore their incompatibility at the level of a literal interpretation of the sentence." *Time and Narrative* 1, ix.

[37]In using this parallel I am not suggesting that Wittgenstein's work is a species of idealism. The attempt to avoid the polemic between idealism and realism, which in many respects defines his later work, is shown in the type of inquiry he pursued.

critique of Collingwood centres upon illustrating the complete bankruptcy of any attempt to offer an alternative account. Furthermore, his confidence in explanation by general laws, combined with his correct assumption that Collingwood is attempting to offer an alternative model of explanation in terms of re-enactment, leads him to foist upon Collingwood an intuitive methodology. Gardiner's approach can be described as the application to the philosophy of history, and to Collingwood's philosophy of history in particular, of the main insights contained in Gilbert Ryle's book *The Concept of Mind*. We might say that his argument draws upon Ryle's important disposal of Descartes' dualism in order to provide a wholly negative reading of Collingwood's doctrine of re-enactment.

In his article 'The Objects of Historical Knowledge' (1952) Gardiner takes Collingwood's appeal to a 'thought-object' literally. Presupposing that Collingwood held to a kind of Cartesian dualism of the mental and the physical, he goes on in *The Nature of Historical Explanation* to consider what would constitute knowledge of this object. The focus of his interpretation is the passage encapsulating the 'outside-inside' metaphor quoted above.

Gardiner recognizes the metaphorical status of the 'outside-inside' formula, but thinks that Collingwood carries it through so relentlessly in commending that events as 'things' should be looked "not at, but through",[38] that he moves away from metaphor toward literalism.[39] He then makes the understandable step of attributing to Collingwood a mind-body dualism equivalent to the 'outside-inside' metaphor. He comments: "Collingwood describes human actions as divided into two separate compartments."[40] The 'outside' is equated with physical movements and the 'inside' with mental contents. It must be said that Collingwood seems to give this impression, and it must have appeared even more marked to a philosopher schooled in the fallacy of Cartesian dualism. Furthermore, Gardiner criticizes Collingwood's use of the word 'thing' to denote an historical event, protesting that events are not things at all - they happen.[41] It is apparent to Gardiner that Collingwood understands by 'thought' some*thing* that lies behind the physical event. Collingwood, then, according to Gardiner, is mainly concerned with how the historian can grasp this 'thought-object'. He offers the following schema to demonstrate that re-enactment is a methodological tool which supposedly enables the historian to grasp the historical agent's thought:

a peculiar entity (a thought) ⇒ a peculiar container in which this entity is housed (a mind) ⇒ a peculiar technique by which this entity may be transferred from one mind to another (re-enactment).[42]

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[38]IH, 214.
[39]Gardiner, *The Nature*, 47.
[40]Gardiner, 'The Objects of Historical Knowledge', 213.
[41]OHK, 212.
[42]OHK, 213. The whole approach of the early interpreters of Collingwood is reminiscent of what Bernard Lonergan castigated as the assumption that 'knowing consists in taking a look'. 'On this

Understanding re-enactment in this way, that is, giving priority to the notion of thought as an 'entity' and mind as a 'container', made the intuitive interpretation of re-enactment inevitable. Gardiner comments: "... the suggestion of some sort of telepathic communication with past thoughts is too insistent to be entirely disregarded."[43] G. J. Renier states that Collingwood turns historical inquiry into "clairvoyance",[44]while M. Ginsberg thinks that re-enactment implies "a mystical unity and continuity of mental processes over-lapping individual personalities which", he comments, "I find it difficult even to grasp."[45] Collingwood's early interpreters were so fixated upon the idea of a 'thought' as an entity hidden behind a physical event, that they attributed to Collingwood the doctrine that an action was a thought's observable effect, furnishing the historian with a means of intuiting the existence of an unobservable mental cause, the thought itself. It is understandable that the argument for the autonomy of history is interpreted as a supposed justification of this intuitive methodology. The upshot of this approach was that it fostered the idea that Collingwood was attempting to by-pass the problem of temporal distance by an appeal to 'timeless entities'[46] called 'thoughts'. This way of thinking allows Gardiner to state that "what is at least fairly clear is that in much of Collingwood's work the desire to assimilate the past to the present so that the requirements of the acquaintance theory of knowledge may be satisfied is in evidence."[47] This result appears paradoxical, because Gardiner places Collingwood firmly in the subjectivist camp when claiming that he holds to a mind-body dualism. The move toward the acquaintance theory is not, however, unintelligible, because it brings to the surface the assumption upon which Collingwood's supposed subjectivism and theory of acquaintance rests. The emphasis on thought is taken as the usual idealist claim that the philosophy of history is constituted by a realm of ideas connected in a great chain of being which somehow forms the historical process. The historian, standing in the present, must grasp these ideas (thoughts), and the only way that this can be done, so Collingwood seems to insist, is by re-enacting or re-thinking them. It follows, then, that in re-thinking the thought of an historical agent the historian has the same thought as the agent. Collingwood appears to confirm this line of argument when he comments: "I plunge beneath the surface of my mind, and there live a life in which I not merely think about Nelson but am Nelson ..."[48] The assumption, therefore, that appears to underlie

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assumption, a term like 'thought' is taken to refer to a mysterious object which "needs an extraordinary language to articulate or a superior faculty to apprehend it. Possession of such a faculty then becomes the prerequisite for being a[n] [historian]. Call it superior insight or the intuition of being"'. I have adapted this from Lonergan *via* Lash, see *Theology on the Way*, 108.

[43]*The Nature*, 39.

[44]Renier, *History*, 1950, 48.

[45]Ginsberg, 'The Character of Historical Explanation', 74.

[46]Gardiner, OHK, 213.

[47]Gardiner, *The Nature*, 39.

[48]*An Autobiography*, 113.

Collingwood's re-enactment doctrine, and Gardiner's ability to unite subjectivism with the Realist theory of acquaintance, is the principle of *numerical identity*. In the context of Gardiner's interpretation, by numerical identity I am referring to the idea that the historian can achieve identification with a thought by an act of intuition rather than by the reconstruction of evidence.

The persuasive nature of this interpretation even infects Gadamer and P. Ricoeur, who place Collingwood firmly within the tradition of 'Romantic hermeneutics'. By this, Gadamer refers to the tradition of interpretation that "conceived understanding as the reproduction of an original production".[49] Gadamer sees this quest for numerical identity or 'original intention' embodied in the naive assumption of historicism that temporal distance is something that must be overcome.[50] Any such proposal would entail accepting the idea that the present is separated from the past. An understanding of the past, therefore, would require that historians shed their own present context and plunge into the context of the past. It is as a method which advocates such an enterprise that re-enactment was understood. Thus, in their own ways Gardiner, Ricoeur and Gadamer think that Collingwood asks the question: 'How can temporal distance be overcome?' Ricoeur, unlike Gardiner, rejects the intuitive interpretation of re-enactment, and thinks, following recent practice, that re-enactment is better understood as a transcendental condition of history. Yet this is enough to show that a rejection of the intuitive interpretation is not sufficient to dislodge the principle of numerical identity.

Following the assumption of numerical identity the concept of understanding becomes entangled with that of empathy. Central to the concept of empathy, understood as an affective concept, is the idea of individuality and uniqueness. This takes the form of insisting that in order to understand an historical agent, the historian must put himself, imaginatively, in the agent's place. The historian must 'become' the historical agent. There is, then, to be no residue, no distinction between the agent and the historian. What I take to be a classic account of empathy is given by Martin Buber in *Between Man and Man*.

> Empathy means, if anything, to glide with one's own feeling into the dynamic structure of an object... or a man, and as it were to trace it from within, understanding the formation and motoriality of the object with the perceptions of one's own muscles; it means to 'transpose' oneself over there and in there. Thus it means the exclusion of one's own concreteness, the extinguishing of the actual situation of life, the absorption in pure aestheticism of the reality in which one participates.[51]

Explanation is, then, thought to be effected in isolation from the work of historical inference. It is the principle of numerical identity which drives the whole process. The principle appears methodological: i.e., the doctrine of re-enactment establishes understanding by appeal to identity.

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[49] *Truth and Method*, 263.
[50] TM, 264.
[51] *Between Man and Man*, 124.

This marks the intersection of the empathetic interpretation of re-enactment with Gadamer's critique of romantic hermeneutics. Both methodologies presuppose that understanding is dependent upon establishing a numerical identity between the historical agent and historian. This reading of re-enactment appears to make sense even on Collingwood's examples. Collingwood recommends that the historian should envisage for himself what Caesar thought about the situation in which Caesar stood, and think what Caesar thought about the possible ways of dealing with it.[52] Understood as a methodological prescription, this appears to appeal to a literal identity between Caesar and the historian. To echo G. R. Elton, this would be like saying: first imagine yourself in the position of the agent, and then attribute to him whatever you find yourself thinking.[53] This prescriptive version of re-enactment implicitly attributes a theory of analogy to Collingwood's doctrine. By this I refer to the way Descartes attempted to solve the problem of our knowledge of other people's thoughts. On his subjective view of language, Descartes saw that if we refer to other people's thoughts, we can do so only by analogy with ourselves. Within (affective) empathy, then, there is a curious convergence of the principle of numerical identity with that of analogy. This convergence is embodied in the empathetic thesis that understanding requires the extinguishing of the actual situation in life (of the historian) in the interests of a total understanding of the agent's situation in life. The principle of numerical identity is the methodological presupposition of this procedure, while analogy forms its justification. This is the root, I suspect, of both W. H. Walsh and Gardiner's criticism of re-enactment as a form of 'self-certification'.[54] In their view, to the question, 'How does the historian know that he thinks the same thought as the agent?' the answer, 'By positioning myself as the agent, and attributing to the agent what I think' is given as a justification. But this justification cannot hold because it appeals to a subjective criterion that is not open to public scrutiny.

It is clear, then, that the principle of numerical identity underlies the intuitionist interpretation of the doctrine of re-enactment. The result of this emphasis on numerical identity, especially in its methodological form, is to make the intuitive interpretation of re-enactment into a *complete description* of historical understanding. This occasions a gulf between re-enactment and Collingwood's understanding of inference, and leads to a situation in which critics like L. B. Cebik reject re-enactment as a hopeless doctrine but who fasten upon Collingwood's important

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[52]IH, 215.

[53]G. R. Elton, *Political History*, 133.

[54]Walsh, 'The Character of', 59. "If the historical judgement is, as Collingwood implies, unique and self-intelligible, there can be no question of the historian's having to make sense of the events with which he deals by exhibiting them in their context and connecting them up by means of a number of leading ideas." Gardiner, 'Historical Understanding', 276. It is to be noted that in this paper Gardiner recognises he was mistaken to attribute an intuitive interpretation to the doctrine of re-enactment.

discussion of inference.[55] This is certainly an unsatisfactory state of affairs, since Collingwood never intended the doctrine of re-enactment to be an alternative to inferential reconstruction.

(II)

Towards a Reintegration of Collingwood's Philosophy

§ 1. Some Introductory Remarks

The integration of re-enactment with Collingwood's understanding of inference and causation begins with the advent of three developments:

a). the collapse of the 'covering law' model

b). the disclosure of the linguistic presuppositions of Collingwood's philosophy of history

c). the interpretation of re-enactment as historical 'grammar'

In this section I shall explore the nature of the first development. It is this that provides the appropriate context for the second and third which I shall outline in the next chapter. Attention to the covering law model will anticipate some of the arguments of Chapters 4 and 5. This is inevitable due to the close relation between the collapse of the covering-law model and the alternative model of explanation that replaces it.

§ 2. The Collapse of the Covering-Law Model

The primary motive for the following, if somewhat, brief exposition of the collapse of the covering law model (or more recently, the 'nomological' or 'law-subsumption' theory) is to demonstrate that the loosening of its vice-like grip upon history occasioned the advent of a new type of explanation sensitive to *historical* explanation. The phrase the 'covering law' model was coined by Dray in his book *Laws and Explanation in History*. His use of this phrase refers to the idea that an explanation "is achieved, and only achieved, by subsuming what is to be explained under a general law."[56] That is, explaining a particular case by 'covering' it with a law. In *The Idea of History* Collingwood traces this form of explanation to the Enlightenment's attempt to construct a science of human nature on principles analogous to natural science. This way of conceiving explanation permeates Hempel's influential paper 'The Function of General Laws in History'. Hempel, following Hume, characterises explanation by general laws through such terms as 'regularity' and 'prediction'. He comments: "In view of the structural equality of explanation and prediction, it may be said that an explanation... is not complete unless it might as well have functioned as a prediction: If the final event can be derived from the initial conditions and universal hypotheses stated in the explanation, then it might as well have been predicted, before it

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[55]Cebik, 'Collingwood: Action', 68-90.

[56]Dray, *Laws and Explanation*, 1.

actually happened, on the basis of a knowledge of initial conditions and general laws."[57] It is clear that for Hempel the main feature of explanation is to see "how things fall into general types and how these general types are interrelated".[58] The correlation between explanation and prediction is not, however, in practice so tight. This is signified by the use of 'because', e.g. "a barn burnt down 'because' a burning cigarette was dropped in the hay."[59] In drawing attention to natural science and its lack of complete predictive power, Hempel is attempting to bring natural science and history closer together in terms of their logical form. That is, there is an *ideal* scientific model of explanation - natural science is very close to it and history not so close - but both bear marks of the same ideal logical model.[60] Hempel uses this concession - the lack of a complete fit between theory (ideal scientific model) and practice (natural science and history) - to justify history's inclusion in general law logic. The main point is that Hempel still wants to apply the 'regularity' thesis to history in such a way that statements of the form '*x* happened because of *y*' keep their validity: that is, in terms of general laws, *x* happened because of *y* is the same as, whenever *y* happens *x* will follow.

Dray's intention in *Laws and Explanation in History* is to invert the relationship between general laws and history, and in so doing offer a critique of the general law thesis from the point of view of historical practice. It is no accident that Dray's dispute with the covering law model begins in the recognition that Hempel concedes ground to the pragmatic nature of historical inquiry. Hempel sought to play down history's lack of precision, even going so far as to show a similar lack on the part of natural science, in order to focus the reader on the logical relation between the two disciplines. This is why regularity rather than prediction is the focus of Hempel's attention. By contrast, Dray wants to show that the supposed lack of precision in history is a prejudice consequent upon using general law logic as the measure of historical explanation. While historical practice is unimportant to Hempel, Dray centres his account on it in order to show that this practice has its own logic. Furthermore, Dray shows that Gardiner departs from Hempel's general law thesis when he allows action of the purposive rather than the reactive kind to function within historical explanation. What was for Hempel termed 'pseudo' explanation, becomes legitimate for Gardiner. As Dray comments, this kind of explanation

> ...far from being 'pseudo', is perfectly proper when we are concerned with human conduct of a purposive rather than a 'reactive' kind. Having denied that "an explanation of the form, '*x* did *y* because he wanted *z*...', refers to the existence of a causal relation between two events", Gardiner goes on to argue that the "function of the 'because'" in such an explanation is to set the agent's action "within a pattern, the pattern of his normal behaviour". The particular action is explained in terms of a dispositional

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[57]Hempel, 'The Function of General Laws', 348.
[58]Collingwood, IH, 205.
[59]'The Function of General Laws', 348.
[60]"the difference between the historian's sketch and an ideal 'scientific' explanation is in the formers lack of precision, not in its logical form." LAE, 5.

characteristic of the agent, and this, he admits, cannot strictly be regarded as subsuming what was done under a covering general law.[61]

On the one hand, Dray interprets Gardiner's introduction of the concept of 'disposition' as a concession to historical practice. Gardiner derives the concept of disposition from Ryle's *Concept of Mind* where it relates to generality at the same time as to human action. As Ryle puts it: "A statement ascribing a dispositional property to a thing has much, though not everything, in common with a statement subsuming the thing under a law. To possess a dispositional property is not to be in a particular state, or to undergo a particular change; it is to be bound or liable to be in a particular state, or to undergo a particular change, when a particular condition is realized."[62] The notion of 'regularity' is still implied, because, according to Dray, "disposition is a spectator's word; it belongs to the language of observing and predicting..."[63] On the other hand, Dray finds the use of 'disposition' indicative of the collapse of the covering law model. Again we can glean this from Ryle's own account of 'higher-grade' dispositions. He comments: "When Jane Austen wished to show the specific kind of pride which characterized the heroine of *Pride and Prejudice*, she had to represent her actions, words, thoughts, and feelings in a thousand different situations. There is no one standard type of action or reaction such that Jane Austen could say 'My heroine's kind of pride was just the tendency to do this, whenever a situation of that sort arose.'"[64] If understood as an application of a law it would mean, according to Dray, that "the success of explanation in history depends on the historian having a sufficient stock of preformulated, empirically validated laws on hand - like methodological spanners which can be used to get a grip on events of various shapes and sizes." Historians, however, may not find themselves, due to the indefinite number at issue, "confronted with standard sizes."[65] Dray's argument, then, is that even in its exponents like Hempel and Gardiner, the collapse of the covering law model is already a feature. It is from this standpoint that he states: "this model [of general laws] is, in fact, so misleading that it ought to be *abandoned* as a basic account of what it is to give an explanation."[66]

The point to be gained from the preceding discussion is that in the work of Hempel and Gardiner there is a discernible shift away from prediction toward a sole emphasis on regularity. As such, the move from laws to rules (dispositions) is a symptom of this shift. It appears as if the application of general law logic to history is inherently problematic because, unlike the former, history is wholly narrative in structure. That is to say, the change from prediction (law) to

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[61]LAE, 15f.
[62]*The Concept of Mind*, 43.
[63]LAE, 149.
[64]TCM, 44.
[65]LAE, 42f.
[66]LAE, 19, his emphasis.

regularity (disposition) is not symptomatic of history's compliance with general laws, but with the bending and eventual breaking of general laws in an effort to comply with the demands of historical narrative. This is not a matter of presentation: narrative is not simply a writing up of results, it has a structural logic of its own. Ryle did not after all take his example of disposition from formal logic.

Inverting the relationship between general laws and historical practice allows Dray to locate the problem of historical explanation not in any lack of precision, but in the logical form of the general law thesis. As Collingwood states: "The historian's failure to establish ... [general laws] results not from poverty of material or weakness of intellect, but from the nature of historical knowledge itself, whose business is the discovery and exposition of events in their individuality."[67] In terms of explaining the French Revolution all general laws can do, according to Dray, is explain it "*qua revolution*; whereas the historian will almost certainly want to take its peculiarities into account as well."[68] In history, then, covering laws, as I said earlier, do not really 'explain', they simply 'classify'. This distinction is important, because it illustrates the inadequacy of the covering law model.[69] At the base of the model is the Humean idea that nothing but 'regularity' can justify a *because* in '*x* because *y*'. This has its origin in the natural sciences for which explanation *is* classification. This thesis, according to Dray, is too simple, because "it would appear that there is an *essential* complexity about what is ordinarily considered explanation; that once the demand for explanation arises, an answer which does no more than represent what is to be explained as what we always find happening in such circumstances fails to explain it at all."[70] In terms of the French Revolution, to say that we can classify it as 'what always happens' given its conditions, is only to *classify* it as a species of revolution. In order to *explain* it, the historian will need to go beyond this and investigate what makes it unique. This helps make sense of Collingwood's 'outside-inside' metaphor. Conceived as a rejection of the idea of classification, Collingwood's metaphor is a recommendation to the historian to always go beyond mere classification of an event by thinking of it in terms of action. This leads to the second assumption of the general law model.

Dray shows that statements of the form '*x* causes *y*' affirm that there is some reason or ground why, whenever the antecedent occurs, the consequent must follow.[71] This is a general law assertion in so far as it is understood that there must be a theoretical connection between cause

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[67]IH, 178.
[68]LAE, 48, his emphasis.
[69]The distinction between 'classification' and 'explanation' is the logical equivalent that locates the supposed idealist expression of the autonomy of history. History is autonomous in so far as it must always go beyond classification in order to achieve an explanation.
[70]LAE, 72, his emphasis.
[71]LAE, 87.

and effect. Dray has in mind Ryle's idea that general laws need not be completely predictive, only theoretical. Ryle comments: "... to have a theory or plan is to be prepared either to tell it or to apply it, if occasion arises to do so."[72] This, however, presupposes an event of a particular type, which is recognized as such only in the application to it of a theory. Ryle admits as much when he states: "having a theory is being at one's destination."[73] This is unacceptable, because the reference to theory cannot give a full account of an event since it lacks the pragmatic dimension. Analyzing the formula 'dirt causes disease' Dray concludes that the notion of 'theory' only applies to the idea of causal law: that is, the stress on 'being at one's destination' is too determinative. The theoretical character of causal law is unhelpful, precisely because it may impede the determination of a cause.[74] Like the stress on disposition, the idea of 'theory' is a spectator's word. Dray moves away from 'causal laws' toward the more open position of 'causal analysis'. This brings explanation down from the heights of theorising and into the realm of action. It is, then, not enough to say that nurses in a hospital made the causal connection that 'dirt causes disease' from observation. What 'observation' makes clear is the passive nature of theorising. For Dray, "the causal connection drawn rested not just on what these women saw, but also on what they found themselves able *to do*."[75] Following Collingwood closely at this point, Dray thinks that *agency* rather than general law theory is a better model of historical explanation in respect of validating a causal connection involving historical agents.

This analysis of the collapse of the covering law model has brought to light two significant points:

i. agency is a condition of explanation

ii. the defence of narrative structure

i.) Laws do not go far enough, since classification cannot make sense of a particular event as distinct from another. With general laws one can never fully account for what comes after in terms of what precedes, without a reduction of the individuality of the later event. What Dray's account legitimates is the idea of seeing the past event from the position of the agent involved. He derives this from Collingwood's doctrine of re-enactment. However, it is not meant as a method, which would render it open to Gadamer's critique of romantic hermeneutics, but as a condition of explanation. As Ricoeur states: "actions imply goals, the anticipation of which is not to be confused with some foreseen or predicted result, but which commit the one on whom the action

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[72]TCM, 270.

[73]TCM, 270.

[74]This is not lost on Collingwood who in the A states: "If you act according to rules, you are not dealing with the situation in which you stand, you are only dealing with a certain type of situation under which you class it. The type is, admittedly, a useful handle with which to grasp the situation; but all the same, *it comes between you and the situation it enables you to grasp*." 104, my emphasis.

[75]LAE, 93, his emphasis.

depends. Actions, moreover, refer to motives, which explain why someone does or did something, in a way that we clearly distinguish from the way one physical event leads to another."[76]

ii.) With the accent upon human action the stress inevitably falls upon narrative as the appropriate form which renders action intelligible. Criticising the use of a 'leak-to-seizure' sequence because it cannot explain the seizure of an engine when tied to general law logic, Dray comments: "reference to a series of facts *constituting the story of what happened* between the leakage of the oil and the seizure of the engine does explain the seizure."[77] Yet in spite of Dray's modification of this example, the problem with the arguments of covering-law theorists is that they are based on examples from logic rather than history. This observation alone illustrates the lack of a 'logical fit' between general laws and historical explanation. The logical operation of the covering-law model is, as it were, *abstracted* from the structure of narrative.

The terms 'regularity' and 'prediction' function by way of securing the 'repeatability' of an event: an event is the thing that happens when conditions appear to warrant its appearance. There are obvious echoes of the Enlightenment programme, embodied in philosophers like Hume, which attempted to construct a science of human nature upon the basis of an unchanging human nature. This programme was constructed upon the presupposition that the 'individual' is unintelligible and hence the positivist principle of analogy became the overriding feature of historiography. The emphasis on human action, however, necessitates not an atemporal sequence but a narrative structure. It is only narrative that can embody temporality necessary to historical explanation. As Ricoeur states: "the world unfolded by every narrative work is always a temporal world."[78]

§ 3. Concluding Remarks

The collapse of the covering law model brought with it a number of positive consequences.

First, agency replaces causal law as the model for the explanation of historical action. This means that a legitimate space has been created for re-enactment to inhabit. In the four chapters that follow this space will be filled as I attempt to integrate the polarised elements of Collingwood's philosophy of history into a unity under the common theme of re-enactment.

Secondly, the critique of the covering law thesis occasions the re-discovery that narrative has a structural rather than ornamental function. Collingwood identifies this structural capacity with the role imagination plays in history. This will be reviewed in Chapter 5. At this point, however, it is evident that Collingwood would have agreed with Dray when the latter states that "history is logically continuous with literature rather than social science."[79]

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[76]TN 3, I cannot now find the relevant page number.
[77]LAE, 70.
[78]TN I, 3.
[79]LAE, 139. In this connection see Collingwood's *Essay on Philosophical Method*, 199-220.

Thirdly, the most important feature of this chapter is the disclosure of the principle of numerical identity as the most familiar, albeit erroneous, interpretative key of the doctrine of re-enactment. To say that Collingwood's philosophy of history does not work on the idealist understanding of identity would be untrue. The logic of question and answer, for example, presupposes successful historical action. However, up to and including Chapter 6 I shall argue against emphasizing this principle as long as there is a tendency to assume that Collingwood thought re-enactment to be 1). a thesis about a numerical identity with the past, or 2). a thesis about establishing the 'original intentions' of historical agents. These two points are interconnected, but the second refers to Gadamer's criticism of Collingwood. This criticism will be explored in Chapter 6. The thesis that re-enactment is an attempt to establish a numerical identity with the past will be challenged in the following chapter and again in Chapter 6. The fault of this interpretation is that it does not take account of the conceptual nature of re-enactment.

CHAPTER THREE

The Anticipation of Modern Insights

(I)

§ 1. The Rejection of Cartesian Dualism

Getting hold of the difficulty *deep down* is what is hard. Because if it is grasped near the surface it simply remains the difficulty it was. It has to be pulled out by the roots; and that involves our beginning to think about these things in a new way.[1]

It may be thought surprising that Collingwood's philosophy shares some of the conclusions reached by the modern linguistic turn in philosophy especially as he exhibits little detailed interest in the analysis of language, indeed, he speaks from within the tradition of idealism. Yet there is no doubt that he was sensitive to some of the issues at stake. But he did not, as Wittgenstein certainly did, devote much of his life's work to such a programme; so the problems which lie deep, that demand an interrogative genius - "These thoughts I am now working on are as hard as granite"[2] - were not Collingwood's real concern: his own concentrated intelligence pursued the problems of historical existence. Wittgenstein's method of working attempts to uncover the seductive nature of the modern picture of the self. Thus, naming the problem is, in Wittgenstein's view, not sufficient to overcome it. In this light, I think it is true to say that while Collingwood realized that the modern philosophy of the self had to be overcome, his philosophy in general did not, at its deepest level, embody the insights which characterize the work of Wittgenstein. In this respect, the way in which Collingwood sometimes frames his terminology gives the impression that he was not perfectly clear as to the nature of the self. However, there is plenty of evidence from all periods of his philosophical career that his considered position was much closer to Ryle's in *The Concept of Mind* than has been supposed.

Let us begin by taking stock of some of Collingwood's pronouncements that are or appear problematic. In the *Autobiography* Collingwood asks the question, "On what conditions was it possible to know the history of a thought?" and answers by stating: "the thought must be expressed: either in what we call language or in one of the many other forms of expressive activity."[3] This seems to imply that thought is something independent of language, something the agent is privy to before language is used to make it public. Saying, 'thought *must be expressed*,' encourages the idea of a physical-mental split between outward and visible expression and inner thought and intention. This is of course how it struck Gardiner. Again in *The Principles of*

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[1]Wittgenstein, *Culture*, 48e, his emphasis.
[2]Wittgenstein, in Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, 514.
[3]*An Autobiography*, 111.

History we find the following passage: "The deeds which historians study are therefore, according to the tradition, deeds embodying or expressing thoughts."[4] The implication here is that since a thought is somehow embodied within a deed or action the trick is to devise a method to extract the thought, which is perhaps the *vital* element, leaving the deed, the outer shell or casing, by the wayside. This brings to mind Wittgenstein's comment: "It is humiliating to have to appear like an empty tube which is simply inflated by a mind."[5] The tendency to believe that mind pertains to what is highest in man and the body to what is basest is the myth underlying such a way of thinking. While Collingwood's use of 'expression', in itself a technical term from his philosophy of mind, can be absolved of the emphasis I have placed upon it (see below), it is more difficult, though not impossible, to acquit his characterisation of art in *The Principles of Art*.

In that book, Collingwood says that the 'work of art proper' "is an 'internal' or 'mental' thing', something ... 'existing in [the artist's] head' and there only... Secondarily, it is a bodily or perceptible thing (a picture, statue, &c.) whose exact relation to this 'mental' thing will need very careful definition... [This] second thing, the bodily and perceptible thing, I shall show to be only incidental to the first."[6] He gives the example of a tune which, despite its setting in notation, "is already complete and perfect when it exists merely as a tune in [the composer's] head."[7] This separation between the imaginative experience of art proper and the art object has, not unexpectedly, provoked criticism from analytic philosophers who believe that Collingwood provides a contemporary example of the idea that mind takes precedence over body.[8] One of the basic theses of *The Principles of Art* is Collingwood's attempt to differentiate art from craft (τεχνη) or from what he terms the 'technical theory of art'. He is attempting to express the idea that there is 'something more' in or to a work of art than its sensible form. This distinction is resolved into the question of significance or meaning, which is to say, he asks the question: 'What is the essence of art, if this essence is not to be identified with perceptible art objects, i.e. craft?[9] In other words, where does the significance or meaning lie? He comments: "But which of these two things [the imaginary tune and the notation played to an audience] is the work of art? Which of them is the music? The answer is implied in what we have already said: the music, the work of art, is not the collection of noises, it is the tune in the composer's head. The noises made by the performers, and heard by the audience, are not the music at all; they are only the means by which the audience, if they listen intelligently, ... can reconstruct for themselves the imaginary tune that

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[4]*The Principles of History*, 39.
[5]*Culture*, 11e.
[6]*The Principles of Art*, 37.
[7]PA, 139.
[8]Wollheim, 'On an Alleged'; N. Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds*; M. Beardsley, *Problems in the Philosophy*; P. Jones, 'A Critical Outline'.
[9]Of course to a Wittgensteinian this is an example of how *not* to think about art: 'essentialism' is anathema to the notion of 'family resemblance'.

existed in the composer's head."[10] Thus it appears as if Collingwood thinks that the significance of a work of art, its meaning, both temporally precedes its performance and refers to a process which is parallel to the performance. Wittgenstein traces this problem (confusion) to the habit of conceiving 'saying' and 'meaning' as if they "refer to two parallel processes"[11] which "take place in two different spheres;"[12] as if, for example, we "would be saying one thing and at the same time seeing a picture before our mind's eye which is the meaning" which either "agrees or disagrees with what we say."[13]

On the evidence I have presented it is difficult to acquit Collingwood of the charge that he believes that there is a mental process of thinking independent of the process of expressing a thought. His use of the phrase 'existing in his head', while an ordinary way of speaking does suggest that, in this instance, literary convention corresponds exactly with his intended meaning rather than obscure what he meant to say. Yet *part* of the problem of *The Principles of Art* is that this is not Collingwood's considered position. The book is divided into three parts; while Part I reads like a provocation to the future author of *The Concept of Mind*, Part III in particular appears to contradict much of what was said in Part I. The problem, already recognized in *Speculum Mentis*, is the presence of two contradictory elements in art: "the paradox of art is that it is both intuitive (pure imagination) and expressive (revelatory of truth): two characteristics which contradict one another."[14] What is significant is that in *The Principles of Art* Collingwood united both elements in the thesis that art is language: "Language comes into existence with imagination, as a feature of experience at the conscious level ... In its original or native state, language is imaginative *or* expressive: to call it imaginative is to describe what it is, to call it expressive is to describe what it does. It is an imaginative activity whose function is to express emotion."[15] This is important, because Collingwood annuls the idea that art as an imaginative experience temporally precedes expression; they are both elements of one experience. Furthermore, this means that what the artist accomplishes becomes an achievement: that is, the emotion, what art expresses, cannot be had independently of its expression: "Take away the language, and you take away what is expressed."[16] Following such an emphasis, Collingwood realizes that there must be an intimate relationship between the imaginative experience and the perceptible art-object. To an imaginary painter he asks: "Are you painting that subject in order to

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[10]PA, 139.
[11]Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown*, 35.
[12]*The Blue*, 33.
[13]*The Blue*, 35.
[14]*Speculum Mentis*, 87. The accent on 'revelatory of truth' must mean *public* expression, otherwise what is truth? This is why I suspect N. Wolterstorff's separation of 'self-expression' (which he attributes to Collingwood) and 'self-revelation' cannot hold. See his *Works and Worlds*, 28.
[15]PA, 225, my emphasis.
[16]PA, 244.

enable other people ... to enjoy an aesthetic experience which, independently of painting it, you get completely from just looking at the subject itself; or are you painting it because the experience itself only develops and defines itself in your mind as you paint? ... The second, of course."[17] Thus, Collingwood realizes that art proper while imaginative is also a perceptible achievement.

> All that is peculiar to [the artist] is the fact that he cannot formulate his problem; if he could formulate it, he would have expressed it; and the work of art would have been achieved... There is therefore a history of art, but no history of artistic problems, as there is a history of scientific or philosophical problems. There is only the history of artistic achievements.[18]

The understanding of art, in other words, is not a matter of retrieving the particular problems associated with its creation, somewhat like the retrieval of a meaning 'behind' an expression but rather of resonating with the artist's achievement. The notion of achievement points to the *self-evident* character of art. This does not mean art is easily understood, but that there is no distinction between 'saying' and 'meaning': "Language in its original imaginative form may be said to have expressiveness, but no meaning. About such language we cannot distinguish between what a speaker says and what he means. You may say that he means precisely what he says..."[19] This echoes Wittgenstein's point in *Culture and Value*: "You might say: the work of art does not aim to convey *something else*, just itself."[20] Coming to understand a work of art, then, is not some mental process running alongside or prior to the expression, but is more akin to coming to appreciate the particular emotion which characterizes any expression. This emotion or feeling is carried in the tone and tempo of the expression, as Collingwood asserts: "If you don't know what tone to say them in [the words], *you can't say them at all*: they are not words, not even noises."[21] There is, he says, "no question of 'externalizing' an inward experience which is complete in itself and by itself."[22] Rather, 'the artist paints in order to see'.[23] In other words, while τεχνη pertains to the power to produce a *preconceived* end, so that, for example, a wheelbarrow is intelligible apart from its construction, a work of art is not capable of being conceived apart from the sensible material in which it is expressed.

It is evident that Collingwood's considered position which reverses the priority of 'seeing', and so annuls the idea that an expression is before the mind's eye and waits only to be translated from a mental into a verbal language, is in many respects consistent with the change in the

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[17]PA, 303.
[18]*Idea of History*, 314.
[19]PA, 269.
[20]*Culture*, 58e, his emphasis.
[21]PA, 266, my emphasis; *The Blue*, 35.
[22]PA, 304.
[23]PA, 303.

picture of the relation between thought and language which characterizes Wittgenstein's philosophy. In what follows I hope to cement this interpretation.

As early as *Religion and Philosophy* (1916) Collingwood rejected Descartes' doctrine that the mind is a non-physical substance and resolves what mind is into what it does. He comments: "This idea of mind as a thing distinguishable from its own activities does not seem to be really tenable; the mind *is* what it *does*; it is not a thing that thinks, but a consciousness; not a thing that wills, but an activity."[24] In the same work he resists the idea that "first we think and then we act" declaring that "the thinking goes on all through the act."[25] We find the same argument against what Collingwood calls the 'metaphysical mind' in *The Idea of History*. In discussing A. Comte's distinction between 'metaphysical' and 'positive' science Collingwood says: "mental science would be, to use Comte's famous distinction, 'metaphysical', depending on the conception of an occult substance underlying the facts of historical activity; the alternative idea would be 'positive', depending on the conception of similarities and uniformities among those facts themselves."[26] Collingwood opts for the latter conception up to a point. It is clear from what has gone before that Collingwood rejected the positivistic idea of regular and predictive general laws; however, being a dialectical thinker, Collingwood saw some merit in the positive conception. The merit lies in the maintenance of a unity between what a mind is and what it does. In this context he praises Hume for his rejection of 'spiritual substance', because there is "nothing that a mind is, distinct from and underlying what it does."[27]

This idea has a central place in Collingwood's philosophy of mind canvassed in *The New Leviathan* (1942). In this connection, the basic point is that body and mind "are not two different things", but "one and the same thing, man himself, as known in two different ways."[28] So that the same methods by which you ask something must lead to the answering of it. The temptation (following the 17th century) is to think that while body and mind are different, one perhaps 'mechanical' the other 'dynamic', both are 'things'; each share, as it were, the common framework of the category 'thing'. Yet to work in this way is, despite appearances, to use the methods of natural science - mechanics - for mental science, so that 'minds' operate like extensions of machines. This is the source of what Ryle called the 'double-life' theory. "The representation of a person as a ghost mysteriously ensconced in a machine."[29] Collingwood sought to show that such an idea resulted in "The Fallacy of Swapping Horses:"[30] that is, using one method (or language)

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[24]*Religion and Philosophy*, 34, his emphases.
[25]RP, 30f. He was of course resisting the account of 'mind' given by William James. "The mind, regarded in this way, ceases to be a mind at all." A, 93.
[26]IH, 222.
[27]IH, 222.
[28]*New Leviathan*, 2. 43.
[29]Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, 19.
[30]NL, 2. 71.

to answer a question which requires another. It is important to note that this is none other than Ryle's notion of 'category mistake'[31] which plays so central a part in *The Concept of Mind*. Ryle was given the chair of philosophy (in 1945) vacated by Collingwood in 1941. In his Inaugural Lecture Ryle recognizes that Collingwood had contributed to the exorcism of Descartes' ghost in the machine: "Professor Collingwood saw more clearly, I think, than did his more eminent predecessors in the philosophy of history that the appearance of a feud between Nature and Spirit, that is to say, between the objects of the natural sciences and those of the human sciences, is an illusion. These branches of inquiry are not giving rival answers to the same questions about the same world; nor are they giving separate answers to the same questions about rival worlds; they are giving their own answers to different questions about the same world."[32] While these comments read like a transcription of propositions 2.63 - 2.74 from *The New Leviathan*, I am not suggesting that the source of Ryle's phrase ('category mistake') came from Collingwood; rather that each understood the problem from within their own fields. Thus, like Ryle, for Collingwood the problem of the relation between the mind and body was a pseudo-problem; the relation between two modes of understanding constitutes the real problem.

In this connection the manuscript 'Notes Toward A Metaphysic' (1933-34) is important. Here we find Collingwood saying: "my own view is something like this:- I cannot admit the Cartesian dualism in which the realist contentions are largely based. Nor can I admit the separation of the intellect from other mind functions."[33] By 'realist contentions' he is referring to the problem of the relation between 'things' and 'ideas'. Descartes' dualism encourages a 'phenomenalism' which thinks that our ideas, as things that happen in our minds, are more real than what can be observed in the world. This leads to the idea that physical things "are only logical constructions out of our sense-data."[34] *Using the same model* 'realism' believes the opposite: "Realism ... meant the doctrine that what mind knows is something other than itself, and that mind in itself, the activity of knowing, is immediate experience and therefore unknowable."[35] Consequently in the case of an act of awareness, Moore claimed that "its object, when we are aware of it, is precisely what it would be, if we were not aware [of it]."[36] For the realist our knowing does not, as the idealist thought, fashion reality but finds it. Hence Collingwood's

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[31]"It [the dogma of the 'Ghost in the Machine'] represents the facts of mental life as if they belonged to one logical type or category ... when they actually belong to another." TCM, 17. The difference between Collingwood's literary style and Ryle's love of exact language is aptly demonstrated in the way each phrased the problem: i.e. 'fallacy of swapping horses' and 'category mistake'.
[32]Ryle, *Philosophical Arguments*, 4.
[33]Collingwood, 'Notes Toward a Metaphysic', Bodleian, dep. 18, 12.
[34]Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, § 366.
[35]IH, 142.
[36]Moore, 'The Refutation of Idealism', 29.

shorthand for realism: "knowing makes no difference to what is known."[37] The separation of the intellect from the other mind functions is, in Collingwood's view, the immediate result of Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*. In that work, Bradley understood reality to be immediate experience and so wholly subjective, while his successors, Moore and Russell, thought reality wholly objective.[38] Thus, we arrive at the same opposition between 'ideas' and 'things' from which we started. In historical thinking Collingwood sought to overcome this dilemma by his use of the term 'the self-knowledge of mind'. Self-knowledge, in Collingwood's view, dissolves the distinction between past and present, the historical equivalent of 'things' and 'ideas', because what mind *is* and what it *does* are its past and present respectively.[39] Yet the real context of Collingwood's refusal to accept the separation of intellect from the other mind functions is to be found in his understanding of language.

In *The Principles of Art* Collingwood asserts that all language, by which he means any bodily movement not only speech, is originally imaginative: "[i]t is an imaginative activity whose function is to express emotion."[40] Intellectualised language, therefore, presupposes imagination or emotion. Collingwood states that the opposite is usually thought to be the case having unfortunate consequences for the acquisition of language. If 'scientific' language is supposedly the original language, Collingwood asserts, a child learns through ostensive definition. However, "when the fact comes out that when the mother points to the fire she probably says 'pretty', when giving milk, 'nice', and when touching its toe, 'this little piggy went to market', the conclusion can only be ... parents are the last people in the world who ought to be allowed to have children."[41] In other words, to speak a language is inseparable from the context integral to it. There is, as Collingwood describes, a 'community of language': "One does not first acquire a language and then use it. To possess it and to use it are the same."[42] He also shows awareness that the relation between thought and language is not temporal, such that a thought is already complete in the internal theatre of the mind before speaking: "the expression of emotion is not, as it were, a dress made to fit an emotion already existing, but is an activity without which the experience of that

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[37]A, 44.
[38]IH, 141f.
[39]'Notes on the History', Bodleian, dep. 13/2.
[40]PA, 225.
[41]PA, 227. It would, I think, be odd for a mother to say 'pretty' when pointing to the fire. She is more likely to warn of the dangers of fire.
[42]PA, 250. It is here that Collingwood diverges from a Wittgensteinian point of view. Wittgenstein spoke of language and its concepts as 'instruments' and 'tools' (*Investigations*, § 569, 16, 23), but according to Collingwood, such ideas presuppose that language has "certain properties or powers in itself and apart from the 'using' of it." A hammer, for example, remains a hammer even when it is not being used. Rather language "is an activity, not an instrument, it does not exist save in being 'used'." 'Observations on Language' undated manuscript, Bodleian, dep. 16/13.

emotion cannot exist."[43] This is carried over into *The New Leviathan*: "language is not a device whereby knowledge already existing in one man's mind is communicated to another's, but an activity prior to knowledge itself, without which knowledge could never come into existence."[44] From this evidence I believe we can conclude that Collingwood's expression 'mind is what it does' has its counterpart in Ryle's statement that "when we describe people as exercising qualities of mind, we are not referring to occult episodes of which their overt acts and utterances are effects; we are referring to those overt acts and utterances themselves."[45] From such a context the dualistic interpretation of the 'outside-inside' metaphor appears both erroneous and overly literal.

Ryle, of course, knew this, but even so I believe he contributed to the Cartesian reading of re-enactment in *The Concept of Mind*.[46] It is understandable, then, given the contradictory signals coming from Ryle, that critics like Gardiner are not more sensitive to Collingwood's rejection of the 'metaphysical' view of mind coming as it does within the same lecture as the 'outside-inside' metaphor. It is as if Gardiner is so obsessed by his knowledge of the fallacy of the 'ghost in the machine' that he sees examples of it everywhere.

From the standpoint of the mind's identity with its activities the 'outside-inside' metaphor loses its intuitive associations and assumes a retrospective character. Gardiner attributed an 'acquaintance' theory of mind to Collingwood because intuition has an immediate grasp upon the object. Collingwood, however, is absolutely clear that 'thought proper' is not immediate experience but reflection. Re-enactment is not, according to Collingwood, concerned with any purely subjective, affective or intuitive interpretation. The point of reflection is that a person cannot know what is thought without expressing it, i.e. making it explicit.[47] So far as historical knowledge is concerned, knowledge is obtained by placing interpretations upon actions after the fact. All knowledge of mind is historical, even of one's own mind, because it proceeds "by studying accomplished facts, ideas I have thought out and expressed, acts that I have done. On what I have only begun and am still doing, no judgement can yet be passed."[48] It is clear that, for Collingwood, the historian's method is not some form of intuitive introspection which attempts to have 'mystical communion' with thoughts drifting around like 'timeless entities'; the historian achieves historical knowledge inferentially. What Collingwood means is that the criterion of a

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[43]PA, 244.
[44]NL, 6. 4.
[45]TCM, 26.
[46]TCM, see esp. 55-9.
[47]Collingwood's use of 'expression', for example, when he says, "In thus penetrating to the inside of events and detecting the *thought which they express*," is, according to the Wittgenstein of the 'Blue and Brown', a better way of characterising the nature of thought. He says: "If you are puzzled about the nature of thought ... substitute for the thought the expression of the thought... The difficulty which lies in this substitution, and at the same time *the whole point of it*, is this: the expression of ... thought ... is just a sentence." See, IH, 214; *The Blue*, 42, all emphases mine.
[48]IH, 219.

judgement must possess a public nature; it must assume the character of *evidence for*. "The knowledge in virtue of which a man is an historian is a knowledge of what the evidence at his disposal proves about certain events. If he or somebody else could have the very same knowledge of the very same events by way of memory, or second sight, or some Wellsian machine for looking backwards through time, this would not be historical knowledge; and the proof would be that he could not produce, either to himself or to any critic of his claims, the evidence from which he had derived it."[49] In view of the synthesis between empathy as method and analogy as justification that characterizes the intuitive interpretation of re-enactment, Collingwood's rejection of Descartes' private conception of language is instructive. In Book D of 'Notes Toward a Metaphysic' Collingwood states:

> it is a complete mistake to argue, as many philosophers have argued, that we ascribe consciousness to other human beings as a result of analogical reasoning based on the resemblance between their behaviour and our own; and no less a mistake to suppose, as some have supposed in reaction against this view, that we enjoy a mystic communion with their consciousness... Thus instead of discovering that there is a public world we begin by assuming that there is one ...[50]

There is, then, no truth in the intuitive interpretation of re-enactment at all. In the light of the evidence I have brought against it the whole idea appears non-sensical. There is, however, the matter of the principle upon which the intuitive interpretation rests. I have indicated already how the disposal of the intuitive interpretation leaves the principle of numerical identity intact. It is, perhaps, the logical interpretation that tends to confirm this.

§ 2. Re-enactment as Historical 'Grammar'

The emphasis on 'grammar' is perhaps justified in so far as it provides a relevant framework within which the heuristic import of re-enactment can be made habitable. Not that Collingwood was a Wittgensteinian in any sense. While Collingwood pursues a mainly confusing analysis of words like 're-enact' and 're-think' in the lecture on re-enactment, I am using the word 'grammar' in a somewhat extended sense. I wish by this use to draw attention to the distinction between the 'philosophical' (formal) and 'empirical' (material) concept that is characteristic of Collingwood's work. The question which forms the first sentence of the lecture on re-enactment, 'How, or on what conditions, can the historian know the past?' is not an empirical question but a philosophical question. Collingwood does not, therefore, equate re-enactment with method and the language of empirical objects which this implies, but attempts, however inadequately, to elicit through a use of metaphor what it is to possess historical knowledge. In many respects, this resort to metaphor was necessitated by the total dominance of the empirical language of science and its poverty of

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[49]IH, 252.
[50]Collingwood, 'Notes Toward a Metaphysic', Bodleian, dep. 18. See also PA, 248.

expression when faced with a non-empirical subject-matter. Yet there was not, until after Collingwood, a publicly valid alternative language which could express with sufficient clarity what was at the stake in the logic of re-enactment. This meant, in many cases, that Collingwood's use of metaphor was deemed wholly inappropriate. However, this use of metaphor is meant to indicate the conceptual rather than methodological character of re-enactment. It is on these grounds that I adopt the word 'grammar' when speaking of re-enactment.

The conceptual interpretation of re-enactment was put forward in opposition to the intuitive interpretation. This had the effect of emptying re-enactment of any methodological content. This outcome troubles Nielsen who makes the point that the supporters of the conceptual interpretation identify the intuitive interpretation with methodology as such. Nielsen regards the criticism of the intuitive version of re-enactment as justified, but thinks "criticism is carried too far if the methodological interpretation is rejected..."[51] Yet nowhere does Collingwood suggest that re-enactment is a synonym for "reconstruction by interpretation of evidence"[52] as Nielsen supposes. The real question is not whether re-enactment is methodological (but non-intuitive), but concerns how Collingwood incorporates both the conceptual and methodological under the sign of re-enactment. The acceptance of the conceptual interpretation, therefore, does not prejudice a resort to method (nor does it identify re-enactment with method), because re-enactment in its 'grammatical' guise does not take the place of method (it does not add anything to historical inquiry) it only indicates what, as I have said, it is to possess historical knowledge. There are, in other words, two distinct logical components to Collingwood's theory: (1) an inferential reconstruction of the agent's situation (method), and (2) the formulation of the condition of understanding this situation (re-enactment-empathy). Re-enactment is, therefore, the *telos* of history.[53]

The 'philosophical' nature of re-enactment corresponds exactly to Gadamer's assertion that hermeneutics "does not develop a procedure of understanding", but clarifies "the conditions in which understanding takes place."[54] Furthermore, as a 'grammatical' account of what constitutes historical understanding re-enactment gives an indication of how attention to the use of concepts like 're-thinking' or 're-enacting' can disclose something of the character of historical objects. This is indicated in Collingwood's report in January 1932 to the Faculty of Literae Humaniores that mentioned as one of his projects:

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[51]Nielsen, 'Re-enactment', 5.
[52]'Re-enactment', 5.
[53]Donagan comments: "Both examples suggest that Collingwood's subject may be, not historical method, but what historical method achieves." 'The Verification', 203. The 'philosophical' interpretation is also recognised by Dray, 'R. G. Collingwood and the Acquaintance', 432; Mink, 'Collingwood's Dialectic of History', 248; R. G. Shoemaker, 'Inference and Intuition', 112.
[54]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 263.

A study of the philosophical problems arising out of history: especially a) logical and epistemological problems connected with the question 'how is historical knowledge possible?', b) metaphysical problems concerned with the nature and reality of the objects of historical thought.[55]

In the original lectures on the idea of history the section on re-enactment is entitled, 'Re-enactment of Past Experience the Essence of History.' The emphasis on 'essence' cannot be overestimated. It is tempting to think this is merely a statement illustrating the importance of re-enactment to history, but I think it is more than this. I believe it is compatible with a grammatical reflection on the nature of the historical object. In 'Notes Towards a Metaphysic', Collingwood reveals his grammatical procedure when he states: "Concepts determine facts as their formal cause, as the *essence* of which they are existence."[56] That is not the clearest remark ever made, but I think that once its 'philosophical' nature is recognized it finds its counterpart in Wittgenstein's clearer and more famous expression: "*Essence* is expressed by grammar ... Grammar tells what kind of object anything is."[57] Re-enactment, then, is meant to reveal the character of the object of history. Secondly, as 'grammar', re-enactment does not offer a method by which we can arrive at the object of history. Rather, it is a necessary condition of knowledge and understanding, not a method for achieving it. Collingwood is attempting to illustrate that the historian, to the extent to which he pursues his work successfully, is always involved in a re-enactment. Re-enactment becomes a synonym for the achievement of understanding or the explanation of historical action.

§ 3. The Re-Thinking of Thoughts and the Problem of 'Other Minds'

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate the conceptual nature of Collingwood's discussion of re-thinking. I am opposed to the idea that his discussion appeals to any methodological procedure for securing a numerical identity between acts of thought. It is to be noted that this section comes under the sign of re-enactment as 'grammar'. This cannot be overemphasized because there is a strong impulse on the part of the interpreter to place an empirical status upon Collingwood's discussion of re-thinking. In part this temptation is very much alive because history is, on the common-sense view, preoccupied with method: that is, with evidence and inference. On the one hand, then, Collingwood's foray into conceptual analysis appears all the more tentative in direct proportion to its innovative character; while on the other hand, the interpretation of re-thinking as an empirical procedure is intelligible in so far as it is consistent with the supposed primacy of the methodological nature of history. The empirical character of re-thinking, however, must be rejected as the way of conceiving what Collingwood is attempting to

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[55]Van der Dussen, IH, xxxiv.
[56]Cited in a different context in van der Dussen, *History as a Science*, 317, emphasis in original.
[57]*Investigations* I, §§ 371, 373, his emphasis.

say with regard to the re-enactment of thought. The burden of the lecture 'History as Re-enactment of Past Experience' is to demonstrate that the re-thinking of a thought is conceptually possible.

After dismissing the idea that the historian has knowledge of the past *via* testimony or observation, Collingwood states: "... what kind of knowledge has he: in other words, what must he do in order that he may know [the past]?"[58] The historian cannot gain historical knowledge through observation or testimony, therefore, historical knowledge must be possible in some other way: that is, "The historian must re-enact the past in his own mind."[59] This way of putting the matter appears to justify the intuitive interpretation of re-enactment. By rejecting the relation between historical knowledge and testimony, for example, Collingwood appears to open the door to knowledge *via* an act of intuitive insight. A further complication is that Collingwood's question sounds unmistakably methodological. Here the dependence upon his literary style has obvious shortcomings. The decision to "speak with the vulgar and think with the learned"[60] obscures the distinctive nature of his conception. Consequently, it is understandable why it took ten years of interpretation even to recognize what Collingwood was attempting to make clear; for it is only in the application of linguistic analysis to history that Collingwood's doctrine of re-enactment becomes more intelligible. Yet despite this lack of clarity, Collingwood is not making empirical statements but conceptual or 'philosophical' statements; he is discussing the 'grammar' of 're-think' or 're-enact a thought'.[61]

The argument of the lecture is complex, and due to its literary nature, confusing. He begins by exposing the conception of 're-think a thought' to an imaginary objector, and spends the rest of the lecture developing a defence of it. The conception is not fully worked out at the beginning, but is gradually fleshed out as the lecture advances. Furthermore, the way he outlines the imaginary objector's criticism demands careful reading. On a first reading it appears as if what separates Collingwood from the objector is a quibble concerning whether certain acts of thought are or are not numerically identical. On reflection, however, he is rejecting the whole conception. Yet because he fails to make this sufficiently clear critics like Ricoeur can read the thesis of numerical identity into re-thinking. This is reinforced by Collingwood's cavalier attitude to precise expression; for while he constantly speaks of thinking the *same* thought, he also says that this thought, while the *same*, is different. Nevertheless, it is this ambiguity which, in my view, opens the way for the conceptual interpretation of re-thinking.

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[58]IH, 282.
[59]IH, 282.
[60]PA, 174.
[61]Donagan was the first to recognise the grammatical nature of Collingwood's procedure. Collingwood's "argument is not in contemporary idiom, but its import is plain. He is exploring what Wittgenstein would have called the 'grammar' of 'think a thought'." 'The Verification', 204.

The imaginary objector argues that to 're-think a thought' could mean either of two things: "Either it means enacting an experience or performing an act of thought resembling the first, or it means enacting an experience or performing an act of thought literally identical with the first."[62] No experience, according to the objector, can be literally identical with another, therefore, the relation intended is one of resemblance only. This latter relation is what is called the 'copy-theory' of knowledge, "which vainly professes to explain how a thing... is known by saying that the knower has a copy of it in his mind."[63] The main point here is that Collingwood wants to reject both these possible explanations of to 're-think a thought'. Both positions, according to Collingwood, are based upon an empirical understanding of re-thinking and a defective philosophy of mind.

Taking the 'copy-theory' first: Collingwood argues in the context of re-thinking Euclid's statement that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal, that for the objector the relation between Euclid's act of thought and the historian's "is a relation of numerical difference and specific identity."[64] It follows from this that the historian's act of thinking 'the angles are equal' is not a revival of Euclid's act, but the performance of another act of the same kind. The historian, then, cannot re-think the same thought as the historical agent but only a copy of the agent's 'original' thought. Collingwood detects that the dogma behind this idea is that there is only one form of identity in difference, namely specific identity in numerical difference.

The empirical nature of this type of identity in difference is, according to Collingwood, not how thought should be understood. As H. Saari has it: "Collingwood holds that the copy-theory of identity is founded on the false assumption that acts of thought are numerically and temporally distinguishable mental entities in the agent's mind."[65] The empirical nature of the copy-theory is demonstrated if we borrow an example from Saari's work who in turn borrows it from Norman Malcolm. The main import of this example is to show that Collingwood's imaginary objector is mistakenly conceiving thought as a physical entity.

> Assume that two fellows, Smith and Wilson, smoke the *same* cigarette after dinner. This claim can be interpreted in at least two different ways. First, it may be the case that Wilson and Smith actually smoked *numerically* the same cigarette in turn after dinner, i.e. there was only one cigarette at their disposal. This would be an instance of numerical identity. In the second case each smoked *his* cigarette of the same quality, that is, their cigarettes were specimens of the same brand or tokens of the same type. In this case we could say that even if they smoked numerically different cigarettes they smoked the *same* cigarettes after all, since their cigarettes were specimens of the same brand.[66]

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[62]IH, 283f.
[63]IH, 284.
[64]IH, 285.
[65]Saari, *Re-enactment*, 67.
[66]*Re-enactment*, 65.

In the second case, that which corresponds to the copy-theory of identity, the main point is that the two fellows, Smith and Wilson, smoke numerically distinct cigarettes but specifically identical brands. It follows, therefore, that Smith and Wilson do not smoke identical cigarettes at all. Furthermore, as Collingwood makes clear in the context of thinking the same thought, why the objector thinks the copy-theory is the only possible way of conceiving this situation is because an act cannot be repeated over again.[67] Yet the imaginary objector is treating of thought in spatial and temporal terms. Collingwood rejects this, because it misses the point of his procedure. "Is it the case that when we speak of two persons performing the same act of thought or of one person as performing the same act at two different times, we mean that they are performing different acts of the same kind? It is, I think, clear that we mean nothing of the sort..."[68] The way Collingwood substantiates his claim is by an explicit reference to his understanding of consciousness and an implicit reference to his conceptual view of mind. Both the explicit and the implicit evidence for Collingwood's claim derives from his rejection of the validity of the argument from space and time. The copy-theory understands mind as an entity or object of some kind. This understanding of mind, in Collingwood's view, is a form of solipsism since it "means denying that we have any right to speak of acts of thought at all, except such as take place in our own minds..."[69] On this view one could never know what someone else is thinking. But as we have seen, thought, for Collingwood, is not a mere object. To know someone else's activity of thinking is possible only on the assumption that this same *activity* can be re-enacted in one's own mind.

The problem for the supporters of the copy-theory is that they are coming at the question from the wrong end. As Collingwood comments: "if he does not already know what constitutes the plurality of acts of thought, the psychological laboratory can never tell him."[70] The copy-theorist is, therefore, working with a fallacious understanding of personal identity. That is to say, the copy-theorist is defining personal identity solely in empirical terms. The difference between, say, Euclid and the historian of his thought becomes the ground for denying the possibility of thought sharing. But on the conceptual understanding of thought "there is no tenable theory of personal identity that would justify such a doctrine."[71] This is because the emphasis on the empirical difference between Euclid and the historian is to miss the whole point. Euclid and the historian are not "two different typewriters which, just because they are not the same typewriter, can never perform the same act but only acts of the same kind."[72] Collingwood is clearly rejecting any empirical solution to this problem. But in rejecting an empirical understanding of mind

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[67]IH, 285.
[68]IH, 286.
[69]IH, 288.
[70]IH, 286.
[71]IH, 287.
[72]IH, 288.

Collingwood is not, despite appearances, replacing this with a psychological understanding. Collingwood's view of mind is conceptual or philosophical. This is evident in a passage from his manuscript 'Notes Towards a Metaphysic':

> whereas my experience can only be mine, and nobody else's, the concepts exemplified in it may be exemplified in other experiences. No two people can have the same toothache, but they may both have toothache. Thus concepts provide a common ground on which diverse experiences can meet. Any world of thought is a public world, accessible not indeed to every mind in common, but accessible in common to any two minds which enjoy similar experiences. It is because they have similar experiences that they can share the same thoughts, and it is through sharing the same thoughts that they can know their experiences to be similar... Experience is nothing but the existence-term of that dyad whose essence-term is thought; consequently what is unified in thought must be dispersed in experience.[73]

In the section on 'Re-enactment' Collingwood is, therefore, demonstrating the conceptual and public nature of thought. The use of spatial and temporal concepts is perhaps relevant in some other context, but in this instance the appeal to them takes the form of a denial of the public nature of thought. The copy-theorist places existence in logical priority to essence: that is, he is conceiving mind as an object, which because it has boundaries must be constituted by private acts of thought. Furthermore, the priority of existence over essence generates the idea that a thought can never be re-thought since a thought can only be thought if it exists. That is to say, a thought is identical with its own existence in so far as it is always an original act of thought. There can be no survival or revival of thought. This conclusion is, however, intolerable, since it would mean not only that there could be no continuity of thought.

This brings us to Collingwood's explicit argument against the copy-theory of identity. Collingwood appeals to his theory of consciousness in order to demonstrate that we can draw a distinction between mere consciousness and thought proper. In so doing Collingwood is presupposing the conceptual or public nature of thought sketched above. The reason why the supporter of the copy-theory lacks an awareness of the conceptual identity between acts of thought is, because "he conceives an act of thought as something that has its place in the flow of consciousness, whose being is simply its occurrence in that flow. Once it has happened, the flow carries it into the past, and nothing can recall it. Another of the same kind may happen, but not that again."[74] According to Collingwood, equating thought with the flow of immediate consciousness is to admit that there is no such thing as knowledge as distinct from immediate experience. The fact that there is leads Collingwood to state that "the contention that an act cannot happen twice because the flow of consciousness carries it away is thus false. Its falsity arises from an *ignoratio elenchi*. So far as experience consists of mere consciousness, of sensations and feelings pure and simple, it is true. But an act of thought is not a mere sensation or

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[73]Collingwood, 'Notes Toward a Metaphysic', cited in van der Dussen, HS, 317.
[74]IH, 286.

feeling. It is knowledge, and knowledge is something more than immediate consciousness. The process of knowledge is therefore not a mere flow of consciousness."[75] Thought is something that apprehends consciousness in its general structure: "something for which the past is not dead and gone, but can be envisaged together with the present and compared with it."[76] Collingwood then goes on to consider that the comparison of one act of thought with another can only be achieved, as we have seen, if one actually re-thinks the thought in question.

To substantiate that an act of thought can be re-thought, Collingwood appeals to the idea that an act of thought 'somehow stands outside of time'. Gardiner detects in this terminology a desire on the part of Collingwood to understand an act of thought as a 'timeless entity'.[77] This is readily understood by Gardiner to be a species of acquaintance. Collingwood's own definition of acquaintance is as follows: "acquaintance is a familiar English word denoting the kind of way in which we know individual persons or places or other things as permanent objects that recur, recognizably identical with themselves, in the course of our experience."[78] Acquaintance appears to be what Collingwood has in mind when he says: "The peculiarity of thought is that, in addition to occurring here and now in this context, it can sustain itself through a change of context and revive in a different one."[79] Yet Collingwood rejects the theory of acquaintance for two main reasons. First, the 'permanent objects that recur' are objects perceptible here and now. Acquaintance makes sense only if the objects in question are existing here and now, even if we do not always observe them. But, according to Collingwood, "[h]istorical thought is of something which can never be a this, because it is never a here and now. Its objects are events which have finished happening, and conditions no longer in existence. Only when they are no longer perceptible do they become objects for historical thought."[80] This makes inferential reconstruction necessary and acquaintance impossible. Secondly, Collingwood argues against an understanding of history as the knowledge of atomic objects, and believes that "the individuality of perceived objects and natural facts and immediate experiences falls outside [history's] sphere."[81] Thus, whereas acquaintance relies on the presence of atomic objects, history is only possible because an 'act of thought' is not atomic but something which can occur in the past and again in the present on the basis of its *conceptual* rather than its empirical nature. This is not to say, as N. Rotenstreich suggests, that he does not take time seriously;[82] rather, he is rejecting the underlying empiricism of such appeals to spatial and temporal concepts. Therefore, in spite of the

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[75]IH, 287.
[76]IH, 287.
[77]See also N. Rotenstreich's 'From Facts to Thoughts'.
[78]IH, 291.
[79]IH, 297.
[80]IH, 233.
[81]IH, 303.
[82]Rotenstreich, 'History and Time', 69.

metaphorical reference, an act of thought does not really (empirically) stand outside of time; he is, despite lacking the appropriate terminology, pointing to a thought's conceptual character. This is perhaps made clearer if it is recognized that the reference to 'standing outside time' is equivalent to the ability of thought to stand 'outside' the flow of immediate consciousness. Collingwood's argument is as follows:

> Thought itself is not involved in the flow of immediate consciousness; in some sense it stands outside that flow. Acts of thought certainly happen at definite times; Archimedes discovered the idea of specific gravity at a time when he was in the bath; but they are not related to time in the same way as mere feelings and sensations. [The act of thought]... somehow stands outside time... in this sense at least, that one and the same act of thought may endure through a lapse of time and revive after a time when it has been in abeyance.[83]

The import of Collingwood's argument is to demonstrate that the supporters of the copy-theory of identity are wrong to equate an act of thought only with what is immediate and therefore temporary. Time is not annulled by thought. On the contrary, thought is just as bound to time as sensation. But whereas sensation (the flow of immediate consciousness) is *identified* with the flux of time and so passes away with that flux, thought is not identified with this flux but is *related* to time in the same way as a tradition is related to the present. Temporal distance is not some kind of dead interval which must be annulled or overcome; rather, it is a process generative of meaning. Collingwood is, then, not asserting that acts of thought survive in some kind of Platonic heaven; the real point of the metaphor is twofold. First, it is meant to demonstrate a logical point from his theory of consciousness, and secondly a metaphysical thesis about how the past lives on in the present in the form of tradition.[84] Hence critics are wrong to interpret what Collingwood says about the 'survival' and 'revival' of thought as a psychological doctrine which is an attempt to leap over the boundaries of space and time. The essence of thought is its conceptual referent.[85] That is to say, it is because persons share the same conceptual matrix that they can know they share the same thoughts.

We now pass on to the second objection. The main concern of the imaginary objector is that an affirmation of identity between acts of thought would be an affirmation of a numerical identity between the historical agent and historian. This identity, however, would not amount to a knowledge of the past but would only be present knowledge. The imaginary objector states the

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[83]IH, 287.

[84]This twofold task is referred to in the following curious statement: "The peculiarity which makes [thought] historical is not the fact of its happening in time, but the fact of its becoming known to us by our re-thinking [it]." IH, 218. In terms of his theory of consciousness this means that not everything that happens in time can be known historically, but only that which can be re-enacted. In terms of tradition the passage refers to the fact that re-thinking is possible because what is re-thought remains embodied in a tradition from the past. For confirmation of this latter point see Ch. 6.

[85]See IH, 303.

following argument: "...so far as we re-enact [thought] it becomes our own; it is merely as our own that we perform it and are aware of it in the performance; it has become subjective, but for that very reason it has ceased to be objective; become present, and therefore ceased to be past."[86] Collingwood's main concern is both to reject the thesis of a numerical identity between thoughts, and to affirm that a re-thinking is possible since thought is not wholly subjective nor wholly objective. Building upon the thesis of a conceptual identity between thoughts, Collingwood argues that re-thinking of a past thought is possible and can be certified if the historian has evidence for the past thought. In dealing with this argument I shall concentrate upon Collingwood's assertion that thought is both immediate (subjective) and mediate (objective), since it is this character as such that makes it knowable and knowable *as* a past thought.

The origin of the objector's idea, in Collingwood's view, comes from equating subjectivity with the immediate flow of consciousness. That is to say, an act of thought cannot be repeated because it is carried away by immediate consciousness. It follows, then, that in order to come to know this thought the historian would have to enter the immediate context of the historical agent and live over again the same. Collingwood is not arguing for the possibility of such an enterprise, he is only wanting to draw attention to the false identity between thought and subjectivity. This is demonstrated when he takes up the main characteristics of the arguments for and against the doctrines of 'internal' and 'external' relations. The doctrine of 'internal relations' denies the independence of thought from its immediate context because

> it has been said that anything torn from its context is thereby mutilated and falsified; and that in consequence, to know any one thing, we must know the whole universe. I do not propose to discuss this doctrine in its whole bearing, but only to remind the reader of its connection with the view that reality is immediate experience, and its corollary that thought, which inevitably tears things out of their context, can never be true...To say that because [Euclid's] theorem, as an act of thought, exists only in its context we cannot know it except in the context in which he actually thought it, is to restrict the being of thought to its own immediacy, to reduce it to a case of merely immediate experience, and so to deny it as thought.[87]

The consequence of the doctrine of 'internal relations' is that historical knowledge is impossible except on the spurious view that the historian must somehow plunge into the historical context of the agent and re-experience the agent's life. Collingwood then argues that others who have taken warning by this consequence, have embraced the opposite doctrine that all acts of thought are atomically distinct from one another.[88]

> This makes it both easy and legitimate to detach them from their context; for their is no context; there is only a juxtaposition of things standing to one another in merely external relations... Once more I am not

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[86]IH, 289.
[87]IH, 298f.
[88]IH, 299.

concerned with the whole bearing of such a doctrine, but only to point out that by substituting logical analysis for attention to experience (the constant appeal to which was the strength of the rival doctrine) it overlooks the immediacy of thought, and converts the act of thinking, from a subjective experience, into an objective spectacle. The fact that Euclid performed a certain operation of thought becomes just a fact... History is no more possible on this view than on the other. That Euclid performed a certain operation of thought may be called a fact, but it is an unknowable fact. We cannot know it, we can only at most believe it on testimony.[89]

The doctrines of internal and external relations leave the historian in a dilemma. Either thought is pure immediacy, in which case the historian must attempt to identify himself with the immediate consciousness and context of the agent, or pure mediation, in which case thought exists as some kind of timeless entity in a vacuum outside experience. Collingwood refuses the dilemma and resolves to inhabit the middle distance between immediacy and mediation. That is to say, for Collingwood, thought is both immediate and mediate. He concedes that the 'idealists' are correct to emphasize the importance of context. Collingwood comments: "every act of thought, as it actually happens, happens in a context out of which it arises and in which it lives."[90] But the identity of the occurrence of thought with its original context is wrong in so far as thought "is capable of sustaining itself and being revived or repeated without loss of its identity."[91] Collingwood's point is that we can think the same thought in the present as was thought in the past, because the objectivity or the mediate nature of thought lies in its conceptual character not in its original context. So far, then, according to Collingwood, the 'realists' are correct to "maintain that what we think is not altered by alterations of the context in which we think it."[92] However, the 'realists' push this too far failing to recognize that thought must happen in some context, and the new context must be just as appropriate as the old.

By taking up the middle distance between the 'idealists' and the 'realists' Collingwood is attempting to elicit how immediacy and mediation refer to thought. In reference to Plato's thought, Collingwood's answer is as follows: "in their immediacy, as actual experiences organically united with the body of experience out of which they arise, Plato's thought and mine are different. But in their mediation they are the same."[93] Collingwood stresses that a vague appeal to the 'principle of identity in difference' is insufficient. What is at issue is the question of how exactly the two things are the same, and how exactly they differ. At this point Collingwood is referring to something explicitly stated in his *Autobiography*. Here he appeals to what he calls the 'incapsulation' of thought which is expressed as follows: "Historical knowledge is the re-enactment of a past thought incapsulated in a context of present thoughts which, by contradicting

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[89]IH, 299.
[90]IH, 300.
[91]IH, 300.
[92]IH, 300.
[93]IH, 301.

it, confine it to a plane different from theirs."[94] By this he is distinguishing between a conceptual identity of Plato's thought and the historian's re-enactment of it, and a contextual difference between Plato and the historian. The historian does not, therefore, numerically become Plato, but remains himself. That is to say, Plato's thought can be re-thought by the historian without one context disappearing into the other. The two contexts are not divorced, but remain distinct; and *because of this* allow understanding to take place. To understand is, then, not to annul the temporal distance between the past and present, but to give it full weight.

But how is the idea of a conceptual identity understood? The conceptual identity between acts of thought safeguards the idea that acts of thought can be the same since they share a common conceptual matrix. "A person who failed to realize that thoughts are not private property might say that it is not [Plato's] thought that I understand, but only my own. That would be silly because, whatever subjective idealism may pretend, thought is always and everywhere *de jure* common property, and is *de facto* common property wherever people at large have the intelligence to think in common."[95] Yet Plato's thought and the historian's re-enactment are different, because the historian cannot re-enact the immediate context of Plato's thought: "The first discovery of a truth, for example, differs from any subsequent contemplation of it, not in that the truth contemplated is a different truth, nor in that the act of contemplating it is a different act; but in that the immediacy of the first occasion can never again be experienced."[96] Therefore, Collingwood understands the identity between the agent and historian to be conceived in the context of a practical argument. This is revealed when Collingwood links the emphasis on identity with a re-arguing of a thesis. "If I not only read [Plato's] argument but understand it, follow it in my own mind by re-arguing it with and for myself, the process of argument which I go through is not a process resembling Plato's, it actually is Plato's, so far as I understand him rightly."[97] Therefore, as Dray has put it, the identity that exists between the thought of the agent and historian is contained in the *rational force* of the argument.[98]

The emphasis on the rational force of the argument brings us to the question of the empirical criterion upon which it can be based. Collingwood is clear that the empirical criterion upon which the historian can match his re-enactment with the thought of the agent is his possession of evidence for it. As Ricoeur puts it in his discussion of Dray, "to reach this point of equilibrium, we must inductively gather evidence that allows us to evaluate the problem as the agent saw it. Only work with the documents allows this reconstruction."[99] This is not meant that

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[94]A, 114.
[95]Collingwood, 'Outlines of a Philosophy of History', 450.
[96]IH, 297f.
[97]IH, 301.
[98]Dray, 'Collingwood and the Acquaintance', 431.
[99]Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* 1, 129f.

suggest that re-enactment is an empirical methodology. Re-enactment is descriptive not prescriptive. In one very important sense it 'leaves everything as it is', for it is finally no more than a reminder of what the historian always does. We must, therefore, keep in mind the two logically distinct components of Collingwood's theory. Re-enactment *in toto* does not provide the historian with any information or add anything to the historical inquiry, for the inferential process is only the first logical component of re-enactment.

§ 4. Concluding Remarks

I have demonstrated that Collingwood's philosophy is both genuinely anti-Cartesian and consistent, in its outline, with post-Romantic hermeneutics. Both these elements of Collingwood's philosophy inform his theory of action. This makes an understanding of action more 'semantic' than psychological. By this I mean that the rational force of an action is discovered by placing interpretations on an action after the fact. Acts of mind are, then, not effects of occult episodes of thought, but the overt and public actions themselves. We cannot, in Collingwood's view, separate thought from action in such a way that action expresses a thought which is complete prior to the action.

Secondly, the emphasis on the grammatical nature of re-enactment finally discards the doctrine's methodological interpretation.

In the final section on the identity of thought the idea that re-enactment was concerned with a numerical understanding of identity was rejected. Collingwood's understanding of identity is conceptual. On the one hand, this legitimates the possibility of historical knowledge, while on the other it shows that what the agent and historian have in common is an *understanding* of a text or situation etc. However, if this conceptual understanding is allowed to remain in the context of 'what it means to re-think a thought' interpreters still tend to think of re-enactment in terms of the theory of 'acquaintance' or such like. This is because the lecture on re-enactment paid no real attention to temporality. Therefore, the conceptual interpretation of re-thinking needs to be brought into the context of Collingwood's understanding of process and its hermeneutical consequences in order to finally discard the thesis of numerical identity. This will be carried out in Chapter 6. In the next chapter which continues the task of integrating the various aspects of Collingwood's philosophy of history, I shall explore Collingwood's concept of historical causation.

CHAPTER FOUR

Taking the Agent Seriously: Historical Causation

Introduction

The relationship between re-enactment and Collingwood's concept of historical causation forms the focus of this chapter. In his later work such as the paper 'On the So-called Idea of Causation' (1937-38) Collingwood limits the applicability of causation to history. This may appear unnecessarily restrictive, but he wants to identify causation with historical agency. While there are, in his view, three senses of the word 'cause', the only proper sense is that which applies to the field of history. What he refers to as 'cause' in sense II and III, while most commonly found in the field of natural science are not species of causation but are understood better in the terminology of 'means and end' (sense II) and 'laws and their instances' (sense III). Though he justifies his argument by appealing to the historical priority of 'sense I', judging sense II and III to be extensions of the former, the real motive for the restriction of causation to the field of history is found in Collingwood's attempted *rapprochement* between the theory of action and the theory of history. This *rapprochement* has two aspects: (1) a general manifesto-like programme which recommends that in the pursuit of a 'science of human nature' philosophers should substitute history for natural science[1]; and (2) a more specific polemic against any attempt to provide for the explanation of a historical action on the grounds of regularity or natural law. This latter point follows from the fact that, in Collingwood's view, a historical action is always an 'individual' action, hence it would be nonsense to inquire after the cause of a historical action on criteria derived from the principle of regularity or natural law.[2] At stake in Collingwood's polemic is the belief that causation can be applied only to a connection which preserves the free will of the agent at the same time as offering a complete explanation of an action.

The chapter is divided into three parts. Part I provides a brief analysis of Collingwood's understanding of historical causation. Following the assumption that a historical action is always an individual action, Part II outlines Collingwood's attempt to identify historical action with the concept of duty. This most important development allows him to use the language of morality to sketch a 'logic' of explanation, thus converting moral language into causal language. The scope of re-enactment forms the subject-matter of Part III. Collingwood's theory of re-enactive understanding has been criticized for being, among other things, too intellectual and too rational to be considered a general theory of historical understanding. While I shall concede that re-enactment cannot stand as an overall theory of historical understanding, nonetheless, I shall demonstrate that, in certain cases, his theory is not as restrictive as critics have supposed.

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[1] *Autobiography*, esp. 77-106; *The Idea of History*, 205-231.
[2] 'On the So-called Idea', 94.

(I)

§ 1. The Centrality of the Agent's Perspective

In what follows I shall restrict myself to the analysis of 'cause' in sense I. In Part II I shall refer to sense II in connection with Collingwood's polemic against the ethics of utility and right, but disregard sense III altogether since it is outside my purpose.

The fundamental point about sense I (and II) is that a causal connection can be established only through agency. That is to say, it is not the situation in itself, but how the situation is understood by the agent that determines what is done.[3] This does not mean that Collingwood rejects the event-like character of history in connection with these two senses; rather, he is pointing out that a causal connection can be applied to an event in so far as the event is seen from the point of view of the agent. Such a position was already a feature of Collingwood's lectures from 1928. He declares: "It is only because each is a free and intelligent agent that he acts as he does; what is said to determine his act only creates a situation in which he exercises his freedom and intelligence."[4] Yet in 1928 he did not believe this was an example of causal necessity. Such a move comes to fruition with sense I:

> that which is caused is the free and deliberate act of a conscious and responsible agent, and "causing" him to do it means affording him a motive for doing it. For "causing," we may substitute "making," "inducing," "persuading," "urging," "forcing," "compelling," according to the differences in the kind of motive in question.[5]

This sense of cause consists of two elements, a *causa quod* or efficient cause and a *causa ut* or final cause. The *causa quod* is a situation, or state of things existing; the *causa ut* is a purpose, or state of things to be brought about.[6] The *causa quod* is not, however, a situation which simply confronts the agent; it is not a situation that coerces the agent into an action and consequently extinguishes free will; rather, it is a situation "known or believed by the agent in question to exist".[7] By *causa ut* Collingwood understands that to be 'caused' to act in a certain way is intentionally (meaning) to act in that way. It is not simply that the agent wants to act in that way, because wanting need not imply acting. Collingwood illustrates his understanding of historical causation by the use of a number of examples. "A headline in a newspaper in 1936 ran 'Mr.

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[3]"Practical knowledge means knowledge of a certain thing not in itself but solely in its relation to someone who a) has to do with it practically, and b) is intellectually capable of thinking about this practical activity of his own and of understanding how the thing with which he has to do enters into it as a factor." 'Goodness', Bodleian, dep. 8, 3.
[4]Outlines of a Philosophy of History, 475.
[5]OSIC, 86.
[6]OSIC, 87.
[7]OSIC, 87.

Baldwin's speech causes adjournment of House.'"[8] The important point to distinguish in this example is that Baldwin's speech did not compel the Speaker to adjourn the House whether or not this tallied with his own intentions; it meant that on hearing Baldwin's speech the Speaker freely made up his mind to adjourn the House.[9] Furthermore, both the *causa quod* and *causa ut* must be present in any example of historical causation. As Collingwood shows: "A man who tells his stockbroker to sell a certain holding may be caused to act thus by a rumour about the financial position of that company [*causa quod*]; but this rumour would not cause him to sell out unless he wanted to avoid being involved in the affairs of an unsound business" [*causa ut*].[10] This tightens up the meaning of historical causation in so far as an act of free will can only be a 'caused' action. If an act were performed out of absolute coercion and determinism, so far as this is possible, it would cease to be a 'caused' act. This is not to say that an act done in sense I is free of compulsion, but is a compulsion, so to speak, taken account of by the agent. The agent, in other words, is responsible for the consequences of his action. It may appear that the intersection between an act of free will and a necessary act is a rather lame formula that admits to a simple splitting of hairs. Perhaps Collingwood is distinguishing between things that in practice are not distinguished. It could be said that the example 'Mr. Baldwin's speech causes adjournment of House' ordinarily *does* mean Baldwin's speech compelled the Speaker to adjourn the House, i.e. there was no other action open to him. This is, however, precisely the position that Collingwood wants to deny. He rejects the idea, contained in the regularity thesis, that all action is fully determined by antecedent conditions actually obtaining. Action in sense I is contingent; that is, 'it admits of being otherwise'. This is opposed to an 'antecedent determinism' which extinguishes free will. Following Dray, this intersection can be made clearer if we distinguish between freedom of action and freedom of the will.

> *Of course* we should not say that a boy who creeps unwillingly to school under threat of punishment goes freely, for this is exactly the sort of situation (and not, for example, a situation in which he is carried or pushed, and thus does not act at all) in which it would be proper to speak of his action as compelled. But whether a person is forced to act in this sense, and therefore lacks freedom of action, is quite irrelevant to the question whether the action he performs is an exercise of free will. What is at stake in raising the latter question is whether, even if his action is compelled or constrained, the agent could nevertheless have acted otherwise - and taken the consequences.[11]

At issue in sense I is the question: 'How can an action be necessitated except in terms of natural law?' It is important to note that Collingwood is not arguing against the view that actions are necessitated, but is arguing for a different logic of necessity. The general law thesis is what we

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[8]OSIC, 86.
[9]OSIC, 86
[10]OSIC, 87.
[11]Dray, 'Historical Causation', 358.

might call an example of natural necessity. An action is said to happen because the only way it can happen, is to argue: 'Whenever *x* then *y*'. This is to put the action under a law which subordinates the action to the principle of regularity. By contrast, according to Collingwood, actions are necessitated in so far as they are seen to be rationally required. That is to say, by denying that the historian needs to look beyond the action to its initial or determining conditions, Collingwood is affirming the sufficiency of agents' reasons for the explanation of why actions were performed. As I noted in Chapter 2, this was the meaning of Collingwood's conflation of 'what happened' type questions with 'why it happened' type questions: the action was the thing to have done for the reasons given.

This intersection of free will and necessity provides an answer to those critics who hold that his theory of historical causation cannot adequately take account of objective facts. Karl Popper, for example, thinks that the doctrine of re-enactment is too subjective, since it cannot distinguish between the situation as conceived by the agent and the situation as it really was.[12] Popper thinks that history should be about situations as they really were, not as they were envisaged by agents. In an example of what he calls 'situational logic' Popper gives an explanation of his initial surprise as to why Galileo refused to accept the lunar theory of tides. In Galileo's time acceptance of the lunar theory of tides was, as Popper comments, 'part of astrological lore.' Galileo had refused to accept the theory, even ignoring Kepler's letters detailing it. Popper also states that Galileo knew that Kepler was a professional astrologer. He concludes that Galileo was dissuaded from an acceptance of the lunar theory of tides because he rejected astrology. All these are objective facts of the situation and the logic of the case called for Galileo's rejection of Kepler's advances.[13] Collingwood's understanding of causation does not, however, exclude 'objective facts' from historical explanation. What Collingwood denies is the idea that the causal efficacy of the situation is derived from the objective facts rather than what the agent believed about the situation.[14] The difficulty of Popper's account is that it is not easy to see how objective facts of a situation could throw light on what historical agents decided to do in it if they believed their situation to be otherwise. Agency does not rely on the independent and objective nature of facts, but on how the agent envisages the facts.[15] This is why the projection

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[12]Popper, 'A Pluralist Approach, 149.

[13]'A Pluralist', 148f.

[14]"If the reason why it is hard for a man to cross the mountains is because he is frightened of the devils in them, it is folly for the historian, preaching at him across a gulf of centuries, to say 'This is sheer superstition. There are no devils at all. Face facts, and realize that there are no dangers in the mountains except rocks and water and snow, wolves perhaps, and bad men perhaps, but no devils' ... The historian thinks it a wrong way; but wrong ways of thinking are just as much historical facts as right ones, and, no less than they, determine the situation (always a thought-situation) in which the man who shares them is placed." IH, 317.

[15]"[N]o historian can ever find 'nature as it actually and indefeasibly is', or 'nature in itself', among the factors that influence the course of history. What influences the course of history is not nature in itself,

metaphor is still of use in history. On Collingwood's model of causation, Popper's example would not be undermined even if further research shows that astrological lore did not favour a lunar theory. Following Dray, Popper's explanation would still hold "so long as it could be maintained that Galileo *believed* that astrological lore favoured a lunar theory of tides."[16] Collingwood's point is that whether or not an agent is wrong in his beliefs about a situation, it is irrelevant to the historian's attempt to display the rationale of what was done. He declares: "when the historian says that a man is in a certain situation this is the same as saying that he thinks he is in this situation. The hard facts of the situation, which it is so important for him to face, are the hard facts of the way in which he conceives the situation."[17] In other words, to say that the agent was right or wrong to think or do what he did is not to offer an explanation of why it was done. This illustrates that what is important to Collingwood is the *subjective* rather than objective rationality of the agent.

The problem with Popper is that he tends at best to set up a dualism between free will and necessity. His approach consists of locating free will and determined behaviour in different worlds, so that the problem of their incompatibility does not arise. On this model, Popper's explanation of why Galileo rejected Kepler's advances is falsified if it is discovered that 'astrological lore' did not contain a lunar theory of tides, i.e. irrespective of whether Galileo thought it did or not. This is consistent with Popper's theory that there is knowledge without a knowing subject, but it is difficult to see how this approach can provide an explanation of Galileo's action as opposed to what he ought to have done. In this respect, Popper's approach is reminiscent of Hempel's ideal scientific model. Like Hempel, Popper is attempting to restrict history to the concept of method, since this restriction defines history's scientific basis. But to try to characterise history as it *ought to be* at once undercuts historical practice. By contrast, Collingwood's starting point is the Kantian question of transcendental possibility. Kant did not prescribe how the natural sciences ought to be, but sought to justify how they already were. Therefore, to ask the question of the possibility of history is to think beyond the question of method in the human sciences.[18] The ghost of positivism inhabits Popper's approach. The re-enactment of an agent's beliefs is allowed a place but this re-enactment is at best a heuristic

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but the belief about nature, true or false entertained by the human beings whose actions are in question. It was not the eclipse, but the belief that days with eclipses on them were unlucky, that influenced so disastrously Nicias's siege of Syracuse." PH, 74. Much the same can be said of the relationship between the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 and the criticism of the metaphysics of 'the best of all possible worlds'.

[16]Dray, *History as Re-enactment*, 51, his emphasis.

[17]IH, 317.

[18]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 466.

device.[19] The applied criterion of rationality is an objective one. The historian is an observer searching for the objective structure of situations. In contrast, we have in Collingwood's interweaving of free will and necessity a sustained attempt to provide for the significance of an action on its own terms. Implicit in his treatment of historical causation is a sensitivity to the conflict between a freedom of open possibilities and a situation which stands over-against the agent, issuing in an action that is *appropriate* to the situation.[20] This theme is echoed in Collingwood's understanding of duty.

(II)

The Rapprochement between History and Action

§ 1. 'Cause' in Sense II and the Concept of Right

In sense II, no less than in sense I, the word cause expresses an idea relative to human action; but the action in this case is one intended to control, not other human beings, but things in nature or physical things. "In this sense, the 'cause' of an event in nature is the *handle*, so to speak, by which we can manipulate it."[21] This sense is defined as follows:

> A cause is an event or state of things which it is in our power to produce or prevent, and by producing or preventing which we can produce and prevent that whose cause it is said to be.[22]

The search for causes in sense II defines the methodology of natural science which is valued not for its truth pure and simple but for its utility, for the power over nature that it gives us. Collingwood derives this notion from Baconian science for which the declaration 'knowledge is power' announced a programme to extract from nature, by way of precise observation and experiment, the secrets it embodied in the cause of real explanation. Bacon's declaration is correctly understood as equivalent to 'nature is conquered by obeying her': that is, knowledge of nature provides the agent with power enabling the control of nature. If the agent were not able to produce or prevent something in nature this would signify a lack of knowledge (knowledge = power). Bacon was typical of the whole movement of anti-Aristotelianism that substituted

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[19]Popper comments: "the process of re-enactment is inessential, though I admit that it can greatly help the historian, by providing a kind of intuitive check of the success of his situational analysis." 'A Pluralist', 147.

[20]"For a man about to act, the situation is his master, his oracle, his god. Whether his action is to prove successful or not depends on whether he grasps the situation rightly or not. If he is a wise man, it is not until he has consulted his oracle, done everything in his power to find out what the situation is, that he will make even the most trivial plan. And if he neglects the situation, the situation will not neglect him. It is not one of those gods that leave an insult unpunished." IH, 316.

[21]OSIC, 89, his emphasis.

[22]OSIC, 89.

efficient causes[23] for final causes in the explanation of nature. Collingwood's idea of the 'handle' is short-hand for this substitution: the 'handle' is that thing in our power by which we can produce or prevent things.

Collingwood prohibits the extension of sense II to the field of history for two related reasons. In the first place, sense II provides the agent with 'general propositions' rather than 'individual propositions'. As Collingwood puts it: "because the proposition '*x* causes *y*' is a constituent part of practical science, it is essentially something that can be 'applied' to cases arising in practice; that is to say, ... 'any instance of *x* is a thing whose production or prevention is means respectively of producing or preventing some instance of *y*."[24] Secondly, a form of regularity is in operation in so far as any instance of *x* occasions the performance of some instance of *y*. This performance is not quintessentially historical, because what is performed is always something of the same kind. With the rejection of teleology nothing new can be brought into existence: the world is a closed totality. On this schema the 'individual' action of history cannot be given its due. Such a schema is predicated on the idea that the future is closed, but free will means the future is open.

Collingwood parallels the explanatory language of regularity with the ethics of utility and 'right'. In fact one of the merits of his understanding of ethics was his unmasking of the relationship between classical physics and utilitarianism and the concept of 'right'. In the paper 'On the So-called Idea of Causation' Collingwood describes sense II as a form of utility, but it is clear from *The New Leviathan* that while it corresponds to utility, in this work it is better characterized as a form of right. There are three kinds of practical reason outlined in *The New Leviathan* which are not mutually exclusive but form a scale, each in a sense interpenetrating the other. The scale begins with utility, through right, and ends with duty. As a means-end form of reasoning sense II is an example of utility, but it is also a form of right because it is action according to rule. Like Ryle's notion of 'disposition', the concept of right is very law-like, because it possesses generality. That is to say, 'right' is the expression of the universal. Right action is a particular action in which the universal is realized.[25] As examples of right he mentions, "the 'right' key for a given lock is any key (not one key, but any one of a *set of right keys*) which in the case of that lock obeys the rules, which a locksmith has to know, governing the relations between lock-form and key-form. The 'right' drug for a disease is a drug which conforms with the rules, which physicians have to know, correlating diseases with drugs."[26] Collingwood's formula for

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[23]Efficient causes are understood, not in the Aristotelian sense (their original sense), but in the mechanistic sense, as denoting impact, attraction, repulsion, and so forth.

[24]OSIC, 94.

[25]Collingwood refers to the concept of disposition as follows:"... a person or disposition is called right in so far as the person is disposed to act according to rule." 'Goodness', Bodleian, dep. 8, 46f.

[26]Collingwood, *The New Leviathan*, 16. 22, his emphasis.

this is *y* (R) *x*, which reads "*x* is chosen because it is right, i.e. because it conforms with the rule *y*."[27] The rule *y* signifies that it is a general thing that is done whenever the conditions for its application recur. The generality of the concept of 'right' is brought out well in the following.

> [Right] is a *generalized purpose*: not the purpose to do one thing on one occasion,... but a purpose to do things of a certain kind on all occasions of a certain kind. This is a *regularian principle* or *rule*. To act on a regularian principle is to decide upon a general of behaving, defined as involving some act of a specified kind if and when some occasion of a specified kind arises... Regularian action not only admits, but ordinarily at least implies, a different sort of time-distribution, namely the application of the rule to different occasions arising at different times. The *y*-purpose, or rule, in this case explicitly refers to a plurality of cases on which it is to be obeyed. Even if it is not known that any such occasions will actually arise, the rule provides for them if they do.[28]

If the historian worked with this model he would, by applying a generalisation such as '*x* causes *y*', know the explanation of what he studied without investigation into the unique facts of the case. However, having discovered the cause of the English Revolution of 1688, the historian does not have a ready-made explanation that he can apply to the French Revolution of 1789. This is implied in *The New Leviathan* when Collingwood states: "Regularian explanations, like utilitarian explanations, are at best partial explanations. *They never explain why a man does this act*; they can only explain why he does *an act of this kind*."[29] The cause of a historical action, in other words, cannot be ascertained independently of an inquiry into the unique facts of the case.

§ 2. 'Cause' in Sense I and the Concept of Duty

> The consciousness of duty is identical with the historical consciousness.[30]

The origins of Collingwood's attempted *rapprochement* between history and action are to be found in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. On the one hand, what he calls the 'free will controversy' of the seventeenth century was symptomatic of the collapse of 'scissors-and-paste' history which can be traced to this time. "The desire to envisage human action as free was", according to Collingwood, "bound up with a desire to achieve autonomy for history as the study of human action."[31] The *dominium* of natural science over history was beginning to dissolve and in its wake arose the autonomy of history. On the other hand, he saw that the rise of the importance of individual action in historical interpretation began with Kant's conception of duty. Yet Collingwood did not believe that at the present time historical action could be dissolved without residue into duty. What he describes in *The New Leviathan* and his lectures on moral

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[27]NL, 16. 3.
[28]NL, 16. 31-32, and 16. 51, his emphases.
[29]NL, 16. 63, his emphases.
[30]Collingwood, 'Goodness', Bodleian, dep. 8, 75.
[31]IH, 319.

philosophy from 1940 is an ideal which he attempts to anticipate. For Collingwood, consciousness of duty is identical with historical consciousness: action based on the clearest sense of the situation one is in. It mirrors exactly the understanding of cause in sense I.

There are, according to Collingwood, two special characteristics of duty (i) determinacy and (ii) possibility. By determinacy Collingwood means that duty admits of no alternatives. "There is only one of it; it is not one of a set of alternatives [right]; there is nothing that will do as well."[32]Any duty is, then, a duty to do 'this' act and only 'this', not 'an act of this kind'. This is important for Collingwood's understanding of historical explanation. Unlike utility and right, duty is completely rational in principle. That is to say, it is only rational explanation - that form of explanation that answers the question 'Why did the agent do *x*' by saying 'The agent did *x* because it was the appropriate thing to have done' - that completely *explains* an action. Both utility and right cannot explain why the agent did *x*, because they can only answer the general question, 'Why did the agent do an act of this kind?' The explanation schema of utility and right is loose in so far as it fits a number of possibilities equally well.[33] That is to say, both utility and right are forms of capricious action in so far as they afford no reason why among the many actions that might lead to a certain end, the agent chose the one he did.[34] It would be a mistake, however, if duty was conceived as complete determinism. Such a result can only be supposed if freedom is identified with caprice. It is rather utility and right that are completely determinate (when transported to the field of history), because they legislate for the future by ensuring that what counts as rationality is accounted for in advance. The concept of right in its inability to explain an individual action actually restricts the rationality of actions to those which fall under the scheme of regularity. Duty has an infinitely wider understanding of rationality in so far as an action is conceived from the standpoint of the agent. Furthermore, and of most importance, it is the complete rationality of actions (as duty) which testifies to the element of free will that is a necessary component of causation in sense I. Paradoxically, the element of free will in an action is discovered in so far as the determinate nature of the situation is discovered. This is why Collingwood can say that the more rational an action becomes, the more completely it will undergo compulsion. The degree of free will and compulsion discovered is consequent upon how completely the agent faces the facts of the situation. What Collingwood is implying is that in a

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[32]NL, 17. 51.

[33]"If you act according to rules, you are not dealing with the situation in which you stand, you are only dealing with a certain type of situation under which you class it." A, 104.

[34]This contrast between the 'tight' explanation of duty and the 'loose' explanation of utility and right is what Collingwood was attempting to bring out in his idea that history is the science of the individual. In his lectures on moral philosophy from 1940 Collingwood comments: "... the answer 'because it is my duty' is a complete answer. What I do is an individual action; what it is my duty to do is an individual action... I do this and no other action because this and no other is the action it is my duty to do." 'Goodness', Bodleian, dep. 8, 70.

completely dutiful action there is a coincidence between free will and determinacy. As he puts it in *The New Leviathan*: "A man's duty on a given occasion is the act which for him is both possible and necessary: the act which at that moment *character* and *circumstance* combine to make it inevitable, if he has a free will, that he should freely will to do."[35] The idea of facing the situation is important, because it is only by this process of exploring the situation and asking and answering successive questions in the form: 'Is it this?' 'Is it this?' 'Is it this?' that the agent can come to perform his duty.

The second characteristic of duty is possibility. Collingwood follows Kant when he recommends that 'ought implies can'. To be under an obligation to perform an action is to do something that one is able to do. It may be that the agent does not know whether he can do it, but nobody knows what he can do until he tries. Collingwood does, however, criticize Kant for embedding this truth in a 'regularian' theory of duty. This not only denies the existence of duty, but 'ought' would never imply 'can' when the act in question meant acting in accordance with rules involving contradictions.[36] To say that 'ought' implies 'can' does not mean that the identification of an action as my duty is wholly conclusive. Collingwood only allows an answer that is 'morally certain'; "an answer, roughly, in the form: 'I have considered *x*, *y*, and *z* as claimants for the title of my present duty: *x* is a better answer than *y*, and *y* than *z*; but there may be a better answer than any, which I have overlooked.'"[37] This is important because it leaves open the possibility that when the historian is studying the action of a historical agent he will have the benefit of hindsight enabling him to outline the consequences as yet unforeseen by the agent.

This use of the ethics of obligation in order to render the distinctive nature of historical causation is astonishing. Yet it is the 'individuality' of dutiful action which is so attractive to Collingwood. The distinction between the question 'Why did the agent do *x*? (duty) and the question 'Why did the agent do an act of this kind? (utility and right) is all that matters. Together with the accent on the subjective rationality of the agent, such an emphasis, irrespective of the appeal to 'moral certainty', removes any moral import from the language of duty leaving only a causal language. This leads to an unfamiliar use of the concept of duty; for it is not only irrelevant to the historian's explanation whether an agent is right or wrong in his beliefs about a situation, but it is also irrelevant whether the agent's action was objectively irrational or wicked in the extreme. A. Hitler, for example, acted 'dutifully' when he engaged in "a systematic legal fight against the Jews, ... remov[ing] ... their privileges," ... and in the end "remov[ing] the Jews"[38] in so far as he "was convinced that the hidden principle of world history was the fight between a

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[35]NL, 17. 8.
[36]NL, 17. 62 - 17. 7.
[37]NL, 17. 81.
[38]Hitler in a letter to Adolf Gemlich, 16 September 1919. In Scholder, *Requiem*, 170.

good and an evil race, between Ayrans and Jews."[39] Thus, Hitler's ominous 'removal of the Jews' was *appropriate* knowing what we do know about his reasons for action.[40] While this use of ethical language may appear scandalous, nevertheless it draws attention to an important facet of Collingwood's understanding of rationality: seeing action from the point of view of the agent is the same as appreciating the agent's subjective rationality.

This *rapprochement* between 'ethical' theory and history can be seen as Collingwood's attempt to separate history from the *dominium* of natural science. It is from such an angle that the reader can perhaps appreciate why it was that Ryle saw Collingwood in such an ambivalent light. In the previous chapter I sought to emphasize the similarity between Ryle and Collingwood in order to disclose the anti-Cartesian nature of Collingwood's understanding of mind. All the time, however, I was conscious that Collingwood was too much the champion of the self-creating individual to rest easy with the idea that the self is simply a 'logical construction' out of behaviour. What Ryle has in common with behaviourism is an almost obsessive distrust of the idea of the individual who stands in his own freedom. I am not denying the fundamental, probably final, critique of modernity's sovereign individual, nor do I want to identify Collingwood with belief in such an individual, instead I am drawing attention to the correlation that exists between the idea of the self and the idea of the self-subsistent. The turn to Kant which is characteristic of Collingwood's appeal to dutiful action, together with the obvious echo of Marx in the *Autobiography* and in the unfinished *Principles of History*, reveal the conflict in his philosophy between an all-inclusive theoretical system which reduces the 'other' to a component part of the system and the recognition that in the end the self as agent is irreducible. It is the necessity of this latter view to which Collingwood points in his appeal to J. Butler's dictum: " 'that everything is what it is, and not another thing.' This means recognising that the subject-matter about which we are thinking consists of facts taken as facts, not of facts taken merely as instances."[41] My point is that to say the self is simply a 'logical construction' out of observed behaviour is to concede too much to a behaviourism that would dissolve the self altogether.[42] At this point the relation between the general law theory and the ethics of right is disclosed. In general law theory an event is explained solely in terms of its necessary antecedents, thus making free will redundant. This reveals the central truth of Collingwood's distinction between action and event. The agent's acknowledgement of personal responsibility for what he did corresponds to his realization of the

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[39]*Requiem*, 169.

[40]"The abundance of sources at our disposal contain nothing to indicate that Hitler saw 'the final solution of the Jewish question' as an instrument in the service of other aims. Rather, they lead inexorably to the conclusion that the Final Solution did not serve a further purpose for Hitler but was in keeping with his values, specifically his conviction that the Jews were the deadly enemies of Germany..." E. Goldhagen, cited in *Requiem*, 169.

[41]Collingwood, 'A Manuscript Concerning Fairy Tales', 13. Bodleian, dep. 21/6.

[42]See MacKinnon's *A Study* for a good exploration of this.

distinction between action and event. The self is not constructed by mere external behaviour, rather, the self is discovered in the interweaving of possibility and necessity: that is, both freedom and necessity are aspects of the agent, not the problem of different worlds of discourse.

In the essay 'Reality as History' Collingwood offers a way of conceiving the concept of action that distinguishes it from character which has a tendency to be conceived as a determinate state. He begins by distinguishing his view of knowledge and reality from its Greek and modern counterpart. The Greeks distinguished between a world of appearance and reality. The first is a constant flux of events, while the latter is a permanent world of fixed forms. Only of the latter can there be real knowledge. In modern (classical) science a similar distinction is made, but this time that which is permanent is found not in a world of forms outside the flux but in it. Modern science discovers the permanent relations between the elements of the flux. The result is that a network of classifications is built up in the form of laws and uniformities.[43]

Collingwood rejects these conceptions because they presuppose something fixed and unchanging. This illuminates the reason for Collingwood's suspicion of the term 'human nature'. It is clear that the context of his suspicion is found in the Enlightenment's idea of a 'science of human nature' that conceived the development of a behavioural science analogous with the laws of physics. The Enlightenment was characterized by a sustained attempt to provide an anthropological foundation for political philosophy divorced in essentials from confessional Christianity. While in fundamental disagreement with this programme for its expulsion of confessional beliefs, in this instance, Collingwood only wants to point out that the methods employed by Enlightenment thinkers were ill-suited to the task. In fact, Collingwood states that, as a science, the term human *nature* derived its power from its analogy with the control of Nature. Furthermore, in his thinking about human nature Collingwood restricts its meaning to 'mind', such that "a mind's nature is nothing but the ways in which it thinks and acts."[44] This gave him an historically conditioned and constituted view of human nature. As such he could collapse the 'science of human nature' into history in so far as history is the development of historical consciousness. This is the tenor of his British Academy lecture in which he argues that rationality can only be studied historically, since by setting up an 'object', naturalistic methods prevent understanding. This was a deliberate move on Collingwood's part and was meant to have far reaching consequences. He never lived to work them out systematically, but it is clear that he envisaged a wide ranging programme for the replacement of naturalistic methods with historicist methods in the social sciences. Donagan has put the matter well: Collingwood's "sole intention was to show that all the social sciences, so far as they have been fruitful, have employed the same

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[43]Collingwood, 'Reality as History', cited in van der Dussen, *History as a Science*, 165. Pagination from HS.
[44]IH, 83.

methods as history, and that those methods are neither applications nor anticipations of a putative natural science of human behaviour."[45] One may wish to quarrel with Collingwood's restriction of human nature to agency[46], but the accent upon the imagined rather than the given is characteristic of Collingwood's belief that the future is open. His attack on substantialism, so pervasive a feature of all his work, displays a deep sensitivity towards the problem of determinism. He saw, quite clearly, that substantialism and determinism both tended toward an ontological acceptance of 'it could not be otherwise' which he believed so destructive of personal responsibility. His attack on substantialism is crystallised in his understanding of mind as 'activity': mind *is* what it does and nothing else. Character is, then, not a fixed and unchangeable substance "from which... actions flow automatically." On the contrary, it is modified by actions, and because these actions are historical actions Collingwood can say, "his past and his character are the same thing."[47] Collingwood does not, however, conceive character as a 'store-house' of particular actions. This would be to fall into regularian ethics whereby an emphasis on characteristic behaviour is made to bear the weight of explanation. Such an idea is found in Gardiner's concept of 'disposition' (borrowed from Ryle) in so far as it attempts to restrict action *via* regularity to *what is to be expected*. Collingwood identifies the determinant of a situation with character which is the past. But the past "as past... is dead and does not exist at all."[48] It follows, then, that an agent's character is nothing more than the historically conditioned part of his present or, as Collingwood calls it, "history itself now living in the shape of fact."[49] Now the historical construction of a character is a fact, and as such it is unalterable; but this does not mean that it can legislate for the future. Along with the determinant which can be likened to the force of circumstances, there is a non-determinate part corresponding to free will.[50] As we have seen with causation in sense I, it is the agent with free will, who, when facing the hard facts of a given situation, performs an action that is appropriate to it. It is this element of contingency that disallows a complete subsumption of action under the concept of character. According to Collingwood, action is not primarily a matter of character but more about an agent's ability to perform an appropriate action. In contrast, Gardiner's use of the concept of disposition is determinative because it always understands an action to be a matter of character. "It represents,

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[45]Donagan, *The Later Philosophy*, 170.

[46]He comments: "I do not deny that the phrase [human nature] may be loosely used as a collective name for those sets or patterns of human activity which we regard, at any given moment, as permanent, and accept as things beyond our power to change " What he strongly objects to is a definition of human nature as "a substantial and unchanging block of characteristics." Rather, "[i]n denying that there is such a thing as human nature, I am thus not denying the reality of what goes by that name: I am denying the implications of the name..." RH, 171f.

[47]RH, 170f.

[48]RH, 171.

[49]RH, 171

[50]RH, 171.

if you like, an *instance* of how he can in general be expected to behave under certain conditions. It sets John's action within a pattern, the pattern of his normal behaviour."[51] The problem with this is that it cannot always do justice to the *point* of the agent's action. The question 'Why did the agent do *x*?' is not always answered by saying 'This is what would be expected'.[52] This is reminiscent of Stanley Cavell's comment on the tendency of the literary critic to focus on a play's symbolic meaning rather than on the players and action. The idea that character supplies an agent with *solutions* to particular purposes, rather than 'space' within which those purposes are worked out, is, according to Cavell, as sensible as supposing that one has explained why a particular couple have decided to divorce by saying that divorce is a social form.[53]

Collingwood's emphasis on duty is, therefore, an attempt to distinguish between character and present action. While character understood historically may seem just as determinant and unalterable as a permanent nature Collingwood's point is that the former is open to the future while the latter is not. That is to say, while it is impossible to be delivered from what we have become, responsibility enables us to see that we are, in a sense, open to fundamental change.

> What history has produced is mere fact - unalterable, as fact must be, but nothing more than fact - whereas 'nature' is something more than fact; it is compulsion. If I do actions of a certain kind because, as a matter of fact, I have acquired the habit of doing them, it is an unalterable fact that I acquired that habit: but it does not follow that, in the further course of my history, the habit cannot be modified or broken. On the contrary, since the habit is a mere fact, it falls away, like any other fact, into the past, unless it is constantly renewed by fresh action.[54]

Dutiful action will obviously emerge from character but the criterion for the performance of this duty is not character but the appropriateness of the action to the individual situation of the here and now. It follows from this that if a habit can be broken the actions performed by the agent will, as a consequence, be new actions, or at least actions performed for different motives. These new actions are not to be understood as a function which rests on an unchanging superstructure; rather, if mind is what it does, the new action will completely constitute the identity of the agent. To assess this identity will necessarily involve giving an account of the agent's action.

The emphasis on appropriate action rather than characteristic action discloses the individual. The Enlightenment programme of a science of human nature neglected this, because

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[51]Gardiner, *The Nature*, 124, my emphasis.

[52]"You know a rule for dealing with situations of this kind, but you are not content with applying it, because you know that action according to rules always involves a certain misfit between yourself and the situation. If you act according to rules, you are not dealing with the situation in which you stand, you are dealing with a certain type of situation under which you class it. The type is, admittedly, a useful handle with which to grasp the situation; but all the same, it comes between you and the situation it enables you to grasp. Often enough, that does not matter; but sometimes it matters very much." A, 104.

[53]Cavell, *Must We Mean*, 276f.

[54]RH, 171.

its denial of historicity meant that human nature was assessed through regularity alone. But this claim to finality on behalf of the Enlightenment is, according to Collingwood, not only disastrous for history, but catastrophic for civilisation. By claiming to understand the other person in advance, 'objective rationality' diminishes the claim of the other person: the past is not allowed to speak of its own claim. Furthermore, this *a priori* understanding reveals a desire to dominate the other. Collingwood meant to outline the danger of such an approach in *The Principles of History*, but he was never able to finish this work. What we do have is a sketch of what he intended: "A scientific morality will start from the idea of *human nature* as a thing to be conquered or obeyed: a historical one will deny that there is such a thing, and will resolve what we are into what we do. A scientific society will turn on the idea of *mastering* people ... A historical society will turn on the idea of *understanding* them."[55] The inductive logic that lies behind the emphasis on the typical and regular is an attempt to put the claim of the other at a distance. By resolving the unknown into the known the inductive scientist is actually denying that historicity is an essential aspect of understanding: induction leaves everything as it is.

(III)

The Scope of Re-enactment[56]

I now want to turn from an exposition of re-enactment and its corollaries to the question whether Collingwood's account is applicable to history as a whole. While the emphasis on agency and thought is plausible, critics believe such an emphasis fails to encompass the whole field of historiography. Consequently, I shall, without offering an exhaustive account, discuss such criticisms as that re-enactment is too intellectualistic and too rationalistic to be regarded as a sufficient model of historical understanding.

§ 1. Collingwood's Supposed Intellectualism

The contention that the historian must re-think the thoughts of historical agents has led Walsh and Gardiner to charge Collingwood with confining history to the study of man's "intellectual operations".[57] P. Winch also believes that Collingwood's contention is "to some extent an intellectualistic distortion."[58] While I think such criticism is really the result of taking the whole conception of re-thinking too literally, critics have not simply misinterpreted it. Rather, in typical fashion, Collingwood gives credence to this criticism by the lack of care he exhibits in the expression of his views. He declares, for example, that only reflective thought can be re-enacted,

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[55]Scheme for PH, cited in van der Dussen, HS, App. I, emphases in original.
[56]For the following account of critics' views on the charge of intellectualism and rationalism I depend on Dray's, HR, 108-22.
[57]Walsh, *Introduction*, 50; Gardiner, 'Historical Understanding', 279.
[58]Winch, *The Idea*, 13.

and goes on in 'The Subject-matter of History' to suggest what he means: a reflective act is "one in which we know what it is that we are trying to do, so that when it is done we know that it is done by seeing that it has conformed to the standard or criterion which was our initial conception of it."[59] The emphasis on conscious calculation is then made explicit when, as an example, he says that if a politician "did the first thing that came into his head and merely waited to see the consequences, it would follow that such a man was no politician."[60] A. Toynbee, surprised by the naïvety of such a comment suggests that Collingwood appears to have no conception of the "intellectually horrifying way" in which politicians in fact behave.[61] If such statements are taken as Collingwood's considered position then it is clear that his conception of re-thinking is severely restrictive. Yet such a position does not tally with what Collingwood says elsewhere. Greco-Roman historiography, for example, is criticized for over-intellectualising history by attributing "far too much to the deliberate plan or policy of the agent."[62] In apparent contradiction of the emphasis on 'calculation' he comments: "to a very great extent people do not know what they are doing until they have done it, if then."[63] Again in the British Academy lecture he declares, quite rightly, that the historian can discover "what, until he discovered it, no one ever knew to have happened at all"[64]- this being a consequence of the fact that, since all knowledge is historical knowledge, the historian has the capacity to discover in the record of what a person did various thoughts of which that person was quite unaware.[65] Finally, because Collingwood like Ryle believes that thoughts have no existence apart from their expression in the agent's life,[66] re-thinking is a semantic rather than psychological category. On this model the agent need not have propositionally rehearsed his reasons for action, because in so far as an action is purposive at all there is a calculation which the historian could construct for it.[67]

What then has gone wrong in the lecture on the 'Subject-matter of History'? Following Dray we can say that Collingwood has inadvertently confused his own technical use of 'reflective' with its ordinary sense.[68] Collingwood's philosophy of mind employs the idea of levels of consciousness whereby each, excepting the first, is a reflection on the one below. Each level, in other words, generates a level higher than itself by becoming an object to itself.[69] There is a

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[59]IH, 308.
[60]IH, 309f.
[61]Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 722.
[62]IH, 42.
[63]IH, 42.
[64]IH, 238.
[65]IH, 219.
[66]"Human nature is mind... with the proviso that mind always means *embodied* mind." 'Notes on the History of Historiography', Bodleian, dep. 13/2, my emphasis.
[67]Dray, *Laws*, 123.
[68]Dray, HR, 112-14.
[69]See Donagan, *The Later Philosophy*, 25ff.; Mink, *Mind*, 113ff.

lowest level, immediate experience, which Collingwood does not consider thought at all. An intermediate level which has feeling for its object, and which he does consider thinking, although not reflective thinking; and finally, a level of reflection that has thinking rather than feeling for its object, this being what the historian thinks, since what the historian thinks about is the thought of the agent. Thus the historian's reflective thought will have for its object, not the agent's immediate experience, but his unreflective thought about that experience (i.e. perceptions and memories): however, the agent's 'unreflective' thought is nevertheless reflective (in Collingwood's technical sense), because it is a reflection on a lower level of consciousness.

Therefore, "[i]t is only", as Dray suggests, "thinking at the level of the agent's responses to what he perceived and remembered which can be recovered by interpreting his actions as expressions of his thought."[70] Collingwood, however, obscures this point by switching from the technical sense of 'reflective' to the ordinary sense. He comments: the historical agent's thought must be reflective in the sense of being "performed in the consciousness that it is being performed."[71] Such carelessness opens the door to the accusations of over-intellectualisation which I have outlined. Yet along with Dray we can say that such criticism does not follow from the analysis that preceded this error, nor does Collingwood's considered position warrant such criticism.[72]

§ 2. The Assumption of Rationality

One of Collingwood's most consistent claims is that "all history is the history of thought".[73] In its most restrictive sense this means that a past action is understandable in so far as the historian discovers the agent's reasons for doing it. Yet, according to critics, this assumes that agents act much more rationally than usually supposed, and excludes from the field of history much of what engages historians.[74]

The evidence of his manuscripts and published work suggests that Collingwood pursued the question of the rationality of historical agents in conversation with Hegel. In 'Notes on the History of Historiography' (1936), for example, while he agrees with Hegel that "human nature = rationality" he concedes that the matter cannot be left at this juncture, but "must be worked out" in detail.[75] In his published work this comes to fruition in two ways. In the first place, he argues that rationality like historicity is a matter of degree, and secondly, as we have seen, he makes an implicit distinction between subjective and objective rationality.

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[70]Dray, HR, 113.
[71]IH, 308.
[72]Dray, HR, 113.
[73]'Outlines', 445; IH, 215; PH, 76.
[74]Walsh, 'The Character', 55; Atkinson, *Knowledge and Explanation*, 26; Taylor, *Bibliography*, 235.
[75]'Notes', Bodleian, dep. 13/2.

With regard to the first way, in the British Academy lecture he states: "The idea that man ... is different from the rest of creation in being a rational animal is a mere superstition. It is only by fits and starts, in a flickering and dubious manner, that human beings are rational at all. In quality, as well as in amount, their rationality is a matter of degree."[76] This suggests, against his critics, that Collingwood recommends that historians discover rather than assume rationality. This view is consolidated when later in the lecture he declares: "It is only in the historical process, the process of thoughts, that thought exists at all; and it is only in so far as this process is known for a process of thoughts that it is one."[77]

While the distinction between subjective and objective rationality is a feature of Collingwood's paper 'On the So-called Idea of Causation', the distinction also reveals itself in the section on Hegel in *The Idea of History*.

> If it is said that human thought is often or generally far from reasonable, Hegel will reply that this is an error which comes from failing to apprehend the historical situation in which a given piece of thinking is done. Thinking is never done *in vacuo*; it is always done by a determinate person in a determinate situation; and every historical character in every historical situation thinks and acts as rationally as that person in that situation *can* think and act, and nobody can do more.[78]

Collingwood calls this a "fertile principle",[79] because it underpins his view that the historian's understanding of the agent's action is to be sought from the agent's point of view. The link between this passage and the emphasis on subjective rationality is strengthened if we reiterate that the 'historical situation' is simply the way the agent conceives it to be. While, therefore, the beliefs of the agent may have been erroneous, and his purposes perhaps foolish or alarming, "the claim to understand the action by grasping the soundness of its argument is clearly compatible with the judgement that, objectively speaking, the action is very irrational indeed."[80] This is exactly the issue in the example I gave of Hitler's action against the Jews. Drawing attention to the subjective rationality of the agent's action is, then, in no way meant to justify this action but only to make it intelligible from the perspective of the agent's reasons.

Yet irrespective of such a defence, the criticism of the emphasis on rationality cannot be so easily annulled. On closer inspection there is a strong tendency on Collingwood's part to assume the rationality of agents. This lapse places restrictions on the applicability of re-thinking

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[76]IH, 227.
[77]IH, 227.
[78]IH, 116, his emphasis.
[79]IH, 116.
[80]Dray, HR, 116. Collingwood comments: "These [actions] include - is it necessary to add? - acts done by an unreasonable agent in pursuit of ends (or in the adoption of means) determined by his unreason; for what is meant by unreason, in a context of this kind, is not the absence of reasons but the presence of bad ones, and a bad reason is still a reason. "PH, 38.

which are not necessary in themselves. However, even if the assumption of rationality is rejected, by concentrating on actions Collingwood severely restricts the field of historiography.

At the end of the essay on *Method* Collingwood declares that, despite its difficulties, the historian must assume the rationality of thought. This, in his view, makes a failure to make sense of thought a failure to understand it.[81] Such an attitude is carried over into *The Idea of History* where he complains that historians who call certain periods dark ages "tell us nothing about those ages themselves, though they tell us a great deal about the persons who use [such phrases], namely that they are unable to re-think the thoughts which were fundamental to their life."[82] It follows that if the historian finds certain historical matters unintelligible, he has discovered the limit of his own mind rather than the limit of his approach or subject-matter. To add to the claim that understanding involves recognizing rationality, the thesis that all actions are understandable in this way, is, therefore, to restrict re-enactment in two ways at least. First, it makes it difficult to understand an agent's action if it were confused, because by assuming rationality Collingwood restricts re-enactment to confusion-free action.[83] If every action expresses a sound practical argument, an action is invalidated if it is done on grounds which contradict the agent's own beliefs and purposes.[84] Secondly, the assumption of rationality completely rules out any action that is done for no reason at all. Donagan suggests that such action can only be explained by saying: "This is what [the agent] chose to do."[85] But since this means that the agent acted capriciously, it is equivalent to saying that it cannot be given a re-enactive explanation. To assume rationality is, therefore, to assume that dutiful action contains no element of caprice at all, which is to contradict the scale of forms analysis in *The New Leviathan*.

While the above examples, with the exception of action done for no reason at all, can be corrected once the assumption of rationality is rejected it is impossible not to maintain that Collingwood's restriction of history to the understanding of action is anything but reductive.

Even though the *rapprochement* between history and action is an ideal, to desire such a thing in the first place shows that Collingwood wants to identify history with agency in order to make history only one mode of the theory of action. This reflects, as W. B. Gallie declares, an excessively "activist" conception of human life, a tendency which Gallie sees in Collingwood's contention that problem-solving is the essence of historical work.[86] Of course such an attitude is expressive of the attempt to replace naturalistic methods with historicist methods in the construction of a science of human nature. But the extent to which he believed agency accounted

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[81] *Essay on Philosophical Method*, 226.
[82] IH, 218f.
[83] See Dray, HR, 119f.
[84] Dray, HR, 119.
[85] *The Later Philosophy*, 230.
[86] Gallie, *Philosophy*, 17; IH, 281.

for the whole field of human affairs is captured in the *Autobiography* when he looks forward to a time when by the use of historical methods humanity shall "*control* human situations as natural science ha[s] taught [us] to control the forces of Nature."[87] This appeal to the coincidence of action and history is rejected by Ricoeur, because it fails to recognize that agents, while they perhaps produce history, are at the same time and more so affected by it.[88] It is here that the moral tenor of Collingwood's appeal to the ethics of obligation comes to the surface; for in so far as history is equated with agency, historical action is made a matter of will: "Man's life is a becoming; and not only a becoming, but self-creation. He does not grow under the direction and control of irresistible forces. The force that shapes him is his own will."[89] This conception allows the notion of responsibility to inhabit historical discourse, but it refuses a place to that which we suffer and undergo. Thus in spite of his anti-Cartesian understanding of mind, Collingwood, in this instance, appeals to an agent who stands outside his situation in the sense that he is unaffected by it. This agent is none other than Kant's individual 'who stands at the bar of judgement'.

Such an emphasis on agency will undoubtedly place a limit on the hermeneutical scope of re-enactment. Yet, contrary to the above remarks, the limit will be found not in a failure to recognize that which we undergo, but in Collingwood's tendency to place the emphasis on intentionality to the detriment of language. While we can place agency under the concept of judgement, signifying a controlling agent who produces history, we must not forget the emphasis on *prejudice* that was so central to Chapter 1. To act is, therefore, always to respond, whether we are conscious of this or not. The agent is always and already placed in a situation so that it is not the agent's plan that determines its course, but the operation of history itself. As Collingwood declares: "Looking back over our actions, or over any stretch of past history, we see that something has taken shape as the actions went on which certainly was not present to our minds, or to the mind of any one, when the actions which brought it into existence began."[90] In this respect, Collingwood recognizes that agency cannot encompass the whole movement of history, revealing an appreciation of Marx's famous declaration: "men make their own history, but not as they please. They do not choose for themselves, but have to work upon circumstances as they find them, have to fashion the material handed down by the past."[91] But along with this emphasis on the *Sitz im Leben* of the historical agent, Collingwood's avowal of tradition as a *force* which *affects the future* discloses his sensitivity to the thesis that agents not only produce history but are significantly affected by it.

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[87]A, 106, my emphasis.
[88]*Time and Narrative* 3, 213.
[89]Collingwood, 'The Devil', 232.
[90]IH, 42.
[91]Marx, cited in Ricoeur, TN 3, 213.

§ 3. Concluding Remarks

The great merit of Collingwood's appeal to historical agency is that it necessitates an open-ended understanding of history. The rejection of teleology in the concept of right leads to an overly theoretical conception of method. This is restrictive, because we can only *think* about closed totalities and so exclude ourselves as agents capable of producing events. Echoing the reverse of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* Ricoeur states: "if the world is the totality of what is the case, doing cannot be included in this totality. Better, doing means ... that reality is not totalizable."[92] It is no accident that both Collingwood and Gadamer agree on this criticism of method. This bodes well for the hermeneutical dimension of Collingwood's philosophy that I shall explore in Chapter 6.

As for the problematic *rapprochement* between history and action, while it does restrict the scope of re-enactment this does not signal a complete collapse of the doctrine. My intention from the beginning was to concede a certain limit to the applicability of re-enactment by restricting it to the action of individuals. Such a restriction will, as I have indicated, necessitate a limit to the hermeneutical applicability of re-enactment. However, though Gadamer is the measure of sound hermeneutics, we shall discover that Collingwood's doctrine goes a long way to meet such a standard.

Finally, the emphasis on 'appropriate action' which was such a pervasive feature of Collingwood's conception of historical causation secures historical reconstruction, because it relies on the unique facts of the case in question. It is best characterized as an investigation into the question 'did the agent face the facts of the situation at hand?' This question can be answered only with the help of historical inference.

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[92]Ricoeur, TN 3, 231.

CHAPTER FIVE

Historical Imagination and Inference

Introduction

It will become evident as the chapter proceeds that Collingwood's developing understanding of historical inference has an increasing concern for narrative truth as against atomic facticity. He rejects a sole emphasis on 'critical history', believing that its preoccupation with testimony prevents it from giving an account of the interweaving of character and circumstance which produces narrative identity. By contrast, with agency in the centre, Collingwood's understanding of historical inference seeks to give an account of the intelligibility of actions and thus goes beyond a purely empirical approach that is tied to inductive logic. At this point Collingwood reveals the importance of imagination to the whole enterprise. Within the lectures entitled 'Outlines of a Philosophy of History' (1928) we find the comment: "Historical imagination (i.e. [a] closer study of [the] nature of historical *inference*)."[1] In other words, Collingwood relativises the distinction between 'history' and 'fiction' in order to demonstrate that the aim of history to narrate the past is possible only on the condition that imagination is interwoven in the pursuit of this aim.

The argument will proceed in two parts. After an analysis of Collingwood's understanding of inference, Part II will offer a brief account of how, not as a method but as an analytic tool explaining success in historical research, the concept of re-enactment should be understood.

(I)

Historical Inference

§ 1. Introduction

The merit of subsuming imagination and evidence under historical inference at once demonstrates Collingwood's belief that both these aspects of history are inseparable. It is, however, beyond the scope of this part to offer a full account of Collingwood's understanding of the historical imagination and evidence. Consequently, I shall focus on the intersection of these two aspects *via* an exploration of Collingwood's criticism of Bradley's understanding of critical history.

Bradley's first academic publication was entitled 'The Presuppositions of Critical History' (1874). It is evident that reading Bradley's essay helped Collingwood formulate his own understanding of historical inference which he stated in his Inaugural Lecture and in the section on 'Historical Evidence' from *The Principles of History* (1939-40), but included by Knox in *The*

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[1] *The Idea of History*, (rev. ed.), 437, his emphasis.

Idea of History. In lectures before his Inaugural, such as the two series from 1926 and 1928, Collingwood simply distinguished between 'dogmatic history' and 'critical history'.[2] By contrast, in his Inaugural, and in the section entitled 'Historical Evidence', he 'down-grades' critical history by distinguishing it from 'constructive' history (Inaugural) and 'scientific' history ('Historical Evidence').

Before proceeding to explore this important development a few comments with regard to Bradley's essay and Collingwood's understanding of its background are in order.

§ 2. Bradley and the Principle of Analogy

The situation out of which this essay grew was the condition of Biblical criticism as developed by the Tübingen school, notably F. C. Baur and David Strauss. These German theologians applied the new methods of historical criticism to the narratives of the New Testament, and the result was very destructive to belief in the credibility of those narratives.[3]

The intention of Strauss was to discover the solid rock of critically ascertained historical fact on which Christian faith could be based. This programme was, however, infected from the first with positivism. Now positivism, "though it actually was a philosophical system, refused to claim that title. It claimed only to be scientific. It was in fact nothing but the methodology of natural science raised to the level of a universal methodology."[4] The characteristic of positivism was a belief that objectivity was gained through neutrality. That is to say, the historian or scientist can get at the 'facts' by divesting himself of all prejudices. This is clearly put by L. Ranke when he states: "[I] extinguish my own self, as it were, to let the things speak and the mighty forces appear that have arisen in the course of the centuries."[5] On this method, positivism fails to understand the past since it is, to use Gadamer's phrase about the Enlightenment, "prejudice against prejudice itself".[6] Strauss assumed on a positivistic basis that proof must be sought for faith before what faith professes can be believed. Collingwood rejects this approach and this is seen most clearly in his early work *Religion and Philosophy*. Historical positivism, conceived as 'pure' history, in Collingwood's view, fails to give any answer to theological questions. This is because the

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[2]See, for example, 'Lectures on the Philosophy of History' (1926), 376-90, and 'Outlines of a Philosophy of History' (1928), 488-91, pagination from IH (rev. ed.). A small correction is needed in van der Dussen's claim that Collingwood did not use the term 'scissors-and-paste history' in the early lectures from 1926 and 1928. See his *History as a Science*, 286f. A close reading of the lectures from 1928 will come upon the following passage: "The historian's sources are, from this point of view, 'authorities', that is to say, places where he finds his statements ready-made; his equipment simply consists of a retentive memory, *and his methods of work are comprised in scissors and paste*." IH, (rev. ed.), 487f., my emphasis.

[3]IH, 135.

[4]IH, 134.

[5]Ranke, *Uber die Epochen der neueren Geschichte*, in Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* 3, 310.

[6]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 240.

'historical Jesus' "can never solve the problem of Christianity, because there never was a 'historical' Jesus pure and simple; the real Jesus held definite beliefs about God and himself and the world; his interest was not historical but theological. By considering him as a mere fact of history, instead of also an idea in theology, we may be simplifying our task, but we are cutting ourselves off from any true understanding and sharing of his consciousness."[7] The question that needs to be answered is, 'Does history have its own presuppositions, and if so, what form do they take?' It was this task that Bradley set himself in his first published work, to be followed sixty years later by Collingwood's own attempt to go beyond Bradley.

Bradley was interested in the credibility of the New Testament narratives, but his main concern was to devise a criterion to serve the historian in the case of miracle. It is interesting to note that Bradley's essay in many important respects anticipates the later work of Ernst Troeltsch, especially in the latter's use of the principle of analogy.[8]

Bradley's essay is an attempt to state the presuppositions of critical history by which he means the grounds of historical credibility or authenticity. That is to say, critical history is concerned with the question 'Did such an event happen or not?' The subject-matter of critical history is testimony, and the critical historian is someone who has to decide whether the persons whose testimony he is using were, on this or that occasion, judging correctly or erroneously.[9] He asserts that the way to deal with this problem of authenticity is to correlate the statement of a witness with present experience since "the experience of others has no meaning for us except so far as it becomes our own; the existence of others is no existence for us if it is not in our world that they live."[10] Bradley concludes that the criterion of present historical knowledge is best served by the principle of analogy. "It is plain from the whole of what has gone before that the ground of criticism is that which is the justification of inference; and an inference, it will be admitted, is justified solely on the assumption of the essential uniformity of nature and the course of events... a judgement based upon our own present state of things, upon the world personal in us; and that this is the sole means and justification we possess for holding and regarding supposed events as real..."[11] The autonomy of the historian, therefore, rests upon the principle of analogy. In one sense, Collingwood attributes the achievement of a Copernican revolution to Bradley's essay, in so far as the historian brings a criterion by which the 'authorities' themselves

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[7]*Religion and Philosophy*, 43.

[8]This is not to say that Bradley influenced Troeltsch, rather both sought to apply the world-view behind Mill's inductive logic to historical method.

[9]IH, 137.

[10]Bradley, 'The Presuppositions of Critical History', 19. This last point echoes Troeltsch's principle of correlation by which he meant that however distinct, all historical events are of the same order, and all are explicable in terms of what is immanent in history itself. On these grounds, miracles, understood as divine interventions, cannot be historical because they break the rules of immanent causality.

[11]PCH, 21, 24.

are judged.[12] "The dead matter which was received on authority, and held true because it was so received, must", according to Bradley, "render an account of its claims. It is [now] true, if at all,... no longer as mere testimony, but because it has been examined and satisfactorily mediated with the critical object as at present existing."[13] In another sense, however, Bradley failed to discover the true criterion of history, because the historian is shackled to the principle of analogy. "The crux arises", Collingwood declares, "when our witness alleges a fact wholly without analogy in our own experience. Can we believe him or must we reject that part of his testimony."[14] Bradley concludes that the testimony can be accepted on the conditions that "it must be equal in validity to our own most careful observation", and that "which was brought as a canon by the witnesses to the observation and to the subsumption of the mesmeric phenomena, was practically the same as that which we ourselves should have brought."[15] He bases this on two presuppositions which, in the light of historical knowledge, make his claim impossible. First, he assumes that for a witness to attest to the performance of an event or miracle, the witness would be free from the influence of models of thought current at the time - especially religious models of thought. Secondly, Bradley's thought is further infected with positivism because he regards the historian's scientific knowledge, as against historical knowledge, to be the means of distinguishing between what can and what cannot happen. In this context, Collingwood asserts that Bradley goes wrong because he does not appreciate that a witness is always a son of his time.[16] Furthermore, Bradley's "proposed criterion is a criterion not of what did happen but of what could happen... It does not serve, therefore, to distinguish history from fiction."[17] In other words, "because it can never tell us what did happen, we are left to rely for that on the sheer authority of our informant. We undertake, when we apply it, to believe everything our informant tells us so long as it satisfies the merely negative criterion of being possible."[18]

On the epistemological level the principle of analogy fails because it assumes a crude picture-theory of correspondence. The question 'Did such an event happen or not?' reveals Bradley's empirical approach to the problem of historical understanding. That is to say, his obsession with testimony, in particular his idea that history somehow exists ready-made in statements, fosters the belief that a true statement once deduced will correspond with the past like a reflection in a mirror. This use of the principle of analogy shows an ignorance of the problem of historical reconstruction. There is no real sense in Bradley's treatment that the historian *must* go

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[12]IH, 240.
[13]PCH, 27.
[14]IH, 137.
[15]PCH, 29.
[16]IH, 138.
[17]IH, 239.
[18]IH, 239.

beyond the immediately given. As a natural law, analogy is used to accuse witnesses, not so much of lying about an event, as making a mistake about it. This is positivistic on two grounds: in the first place, it sets up a schema of 'objective fact' and its 'interpretation'. Witnesses interpret an 'objective' fact erroneously. Thus 'interpretation' (a specifically religious model of thought) has *nothing to do* with the objective happening. Secondly, witnesses are mistaken because their ideas about it are 'primitive' and pseudo-scientific or such like. In other words, positivism and the principle of analogy presuppose that past ideas are mistaken and henceforth only the ideas of the present time can be used as a criterion of what is authentic. This is, however, disastrous for history; since it means that the past in-itself cannot be known. If the criterion of authenticity is weighted completely in favour of the principle of analogy it means that if the past happens to be unlike the present then the past cannot be true. We are left in the ludicrous situation where the historian's results, conclusions gained through historical research, are overruled by the principle of analogy. Analogy is, then, inherently naturalistic (unhistorical). It trades on the fiction of a view from 'nowhere in particular', but as such sees nothing that it is not filtered through its own spectacles. Evidently, it is the inductive logic of J. S. Mill which casts its shadow over Bradley's essay. His understanding of analogy is based on induction from observed facts on the principle that the future will resemble the past and the unknown the known.[19]

Collingwood argues that if the idea that the past must be judged solely from the present is given up, the past is allowed to tell its own tale. No argument from analogy then will hold, because the historical as distinct from the natural conditions of life differ so much at different times. As an illustration Collingwood offers the following wry comment: "that the Greeks and Romans exposed their new-born children in order to control the numbers of their population is no less true for being unlike anything that happens in the experience of contributors to the *Cambridge Ancient History*."[20]

Present experience, then, cannot be the criterion of historical truth, if present experience is understood in terms of perception. Even though historical facts are not observed, Bradley's use of the positivistic principle of analogy discloses a desire on his part to treat historical facts as if they were of the same order as observed facts. He accepts the authenticity of unobserved past facts on observed conditions at present obtaining (the unknown to the known). This implicitly assumes, however, that an historical fact is an observable atomic entity. Collingwood wants to rebut this suggestion not only because it is a wholly inaccurate account of historical inference,[21]

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[19]IH, 139.

[20]IH, 240.

[21]"When it is said that science consists first in ascertaining facts and then in discovering laws, the facts, here, are facts directly observed by the scientist: for example, the fact that this guinea-pig, after receiving an injection of this culture, develops tetanus. If any one doubts the fact he can repeat the experiment with another guinea-pig, which will do just as well; and consequently, for the scientist, the

but because its underlying empiricism encourages the idea that history is contained in atomic statements of fact that correspond to the past.

The criterion of historical truth can only be discovered, in Collingwood's view, if we presuppose the autonomy of the historian. There are two ways of doing this: one is the critical way that Bradley analyzed but which was found wanting, the other is the constructive way which Collingwood proceeds to explore.

§ 3. Historical Evidence

In his introduction to the new edition of *The Idea of History* van der Dussen notes that Collingwood's treatment of historical inference in the Inaugural and 'Historical Evidence' "contain different arguments" and are even "contradictory in certain essential respects."[22] He is referring to the fact that, whereas in past treatments of historical inference Collingwood championed critical history, he abandoned it in 'Historical Evidence'. I believe, however, that what appears contradictory can be made intelligible.

First, placing this discussion within the wider context of the lectures from 1926 and 1928 is helpful, because it shows that Collingwood's understanding of evidence was always developing. We shall see that it was Collingwood's orientation towards archaeology which gradually influenced his understanding of evidence, until finally, in *The Principles of History*, it became the dominant vehicle for a correct account of evidence. The emphasis on the *autonomy* of the historian, arguably the central principle of Collingwood's understanding of historical inference, is directly related to the practice of archaeology, and makes the rejection of critical history intelligible. We might say that, in his later work on methodology, Collingwood emphasized the formal or conceptual side of interpretation rather than its material or empirical side. It is this, influenced as it was by the nature of archaeological research which, I believe, occasions his 'down-grading' of critical history.

Secondly, I shall show that what is rejected in 'Historical Evidence' is not the critical history outlined in the lectures from 1926 and 1928, but the understanding of critical history which, in Collingwood's view, is found in Bradley's essay. While perhaps unfair to Bradley, the point of making critical history simply one mode of 'scissors-and-paste' history is to draw attention to the distinction which follows from a thorough-going application of autonomy: the

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question whether the facts really are what they are said to be is never a vital question, because he can always reproduce the facts under his own eyes. In science, then, the facts are empirical facts, facts perceived as they occur. In history, the word 'fact' bears a very different meaning. The fact that in the second century the legions began to be recruited wholly outside Italy is not immediately given. It is arrived at inferentially by a process of interpreting data according to a complicated system of rules and assumptions." IH, 132f.

[22]Van der Dussen, IH, xli.

'critical' historian presupposes the ready-made 'source' and therefore limits his autonomy, whereas in 'scientific' history the historian's question is logically prior to the source. Consequently, this not only broadens the field of evidence, but also escapes Bradley's attempt to limit the bounds of historical authenticity to a correlation between fact and testimony.

§ 4. The Lectures from 1926 and 1928

At stake in the lectures from 1926 and 1928 is the attempt to disentangle historical inference from any idea that it is dependent upon ready-made statements. The questioning activity and historical sources are the two 'axioms' of this argument. Collingwood consistently applied both axioms until he wrote *The Principles of History* in which he rejected the emphasis on sources. Yet, as I shall indicate, the seeds of such a rejection were already apparent in his earlier work.

Emphasising ready-made statements encourages the idea that the historian simply fits them into a narrative, but with sources it is different. The historian's attitude towards them must consist neither in acceptance nor in rejection, but in interpretation. This assumes that the truth of which the historian is in search was not possessed, ready-made, by the writer or witness whom he is studying.[23] At this point in the lectures from 1926, Collingwood adopts the terminology of Bacon to show that critical history is not a passive surrender to the mind of another but autonomous and critical thinking. In critical history all witnesses are discredited, in the sense that all statements lack finality, because history is no longer ready-made but in need of the constructive skills of the historian. Statements and previous narratives are but "material out of which, by thinking for ourselves, we may hope to construct history."[24] Raymond Aron, a French contemporary of Collingwood, was pointing to the same idea in his thesis of the 'dissolution of the object'. For Aron, like Collingwood, no "such thing as a *historical reality* exists ready made, so that science merely has to reproduce it faithfully."[25]

It is evident that in 1926 Collingwood regarded critical history as both autonomous and scientific. Furthermore, he saw that critical history was concerned with the interpretation of sources and not their status as true or false accounts about states of affairs. In this respect his

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[23]LPH, 377.

[24]LPH, 382.

[25]Aron, *Introduction*, 118. In a brief discussion of Aron's notion of the 'dissolution of the object' Ricoeur states: "It meant no more than this: to the extent that historians are implicated in the understanding and explanation of past events, an absolute event cannot be attested to by the historical discourse. Understanding-even the understanding of another person in everyday life-is never a direct intuition but always a reconstruction", TN 1, 97. The rejection of intuition is a presupposition of the logic of question and answer. "My work in archaeology... impressed upon me the importance of the 'questioning activity' in knowledge: and this made it impossible for me to rest contented with the intuitionist theory of knowledge favoured by the 'realists'." *Autobiography*, 30.

own understanding of critical history goes beyond Bradley's, since it is constructive as well as critical.

The treatment of evidence essentially remains the same in the lectures from 1928, but there is a change, which in the light of Collingwood's mature work is significant. In the lectures from 1928 Collingwood gives added emphasis to the logic of questioning and to what he calls 'unwritten sources'. While it is important to note that the questioning activity and its correlate - the use of 'unwritten sources' - are essential products of *critical* history, the real importance of this development lies in its disclosure of archaeology as Collingwood's model for historical inference.

Collingwood's positive evaluation of what he calls 'unwritten sources' derives from his archaeological practice. The period of Roman Britain lacks substantive written sources, such as books and documents, but is rich in archaeological remains. It is easy to see how Collingwood gradually identified historical research with archaeological research, since it is in the history of Roman Britain, his own specialist field, that the two become one. In the lectures from 1928 Collingwood saw that the distinction between written and unwritten sources was really a distinction between authorities and sources. In the former is found ready-made history in the ready-made statements of witnesses, while in the latter, history is to be constructed using questions concerning the purpose of remains, i.e. what they were for. But with critical history this distinction vanishes and the historian, following the lead of the archaeologist, treats both as sources. "The difference is that whereas an authority makes statements which we accept and repeat, a source is something which enables us to make a statement of our own."[26] The historian's *question* and the *source* are, therefore, the identifying marks of critical history. It is evident, however, that the emphasis on autonomy comes from the side of archaeology. "An historian innocent of all archaeology is an historian with no power of genuine historical thought, able only to accept what he finds his authorities saying."[27] This means that the practice of the 'logic of question and answer', which is proper to the realm of unwritten sources but extended to the realm of written, is the standard by which the historian is adjudged to be critical. However, it is not such a large step from this position to one which divorces archaeological research (i.e. 'scientific' history) from critical history. He does this implicitly when, in the lectures from 1928, he makes a faint but discernible distinction between sources and evidence. "Practically, which means truly, evidence is only evidence when it is interpreted; and this means that someone must interpret it. But first of all he must look for it; and this means that he must have in his mind a question which he is trying to answer... for evidence means facts relevant to a question, pointing towards an

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[26]OPH, 488.
[27]OPH, 491.

answer."[28] Collingwood, therefore, had only to develop the implications of the principle of autonomy inherent in the emphasis on questioning and non-literary sources in order to down-grade critical history.

§ 5. Collingwood's Critique of Critical History: Scissors-and-Paste

While the account of inference in 'Historical Evidence' leans toward an emphasis on organised and reasoned knowledge which follows from the evidence, the main concern of Collingwood is with the reconstruction of the historical object. That is to say, like 'Historical Imagination', the section on evidence is concerned to show how the historian argues from the imaginary to the real in his attempt at reconstruction. This emphasis on construction provides the key to an understanding of scientific history or what I shall sometimes call 'post-critical' history. It is tempting to think that by scientific history Collingwood has in mind the exact minuteness of which Gallie is so critical.[29] Yet irrespective of his 'excessively activist' conception of history, this is not the case. Collingwood does not recommend the collection of every conceivable piece of data on the subject nor the collection of every possible artefact within the period under investigation. The model for Collingwood's historian is Hercule Poirot not Sherlock Holmes.[30] By scientific history Collingwood has in mind the asking of specific questions, asked in the right order, which build up a picture of the past as the question-answer complex advances. This makes it clearer that Collingwood's rejection of ready-made history is identical with his rejection of testimony as the principle subject-matter of historical research. History-proper proceeds on the principle that no history exists ready-made and as such there is no point looking to testimony to seek a ready-made content that mirrors the past. The logic of question and answer presupposes that any statement from the past will not be understood unless the question to which the statement is an answer is known. It follows that the past, in important respects, will not resemble the present: that is, historical consciousness is a necessary feature of the logic of question and answer. This breaks right out of the circle drawn by Bradley's theory. The questions asked,

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[28]OPH, 485.

[29]Gallie, *Philosophy*, 17.

[30]"It was a correct understanding of this truth that underlay Lord Acton's great precept, 'Study problems, not periods'. Scissors-and-paste historians study periods; they collect all the extant testimony about a certain limited group of events, and hope in vain that something will come of it. Scientific historians study problems: they ask questions, and if they are good historians they ask questions which they see their way to answering. It was a correct understanding of the same truth that led Monsieur Hercule Poirot to pour scorn on the 'human blood-hound' who crawls about the floor trying to collect everything, no matter what, which might conceivably turn out to be a clue; and to insist that the secret of detection was to use what, with possibly wearisome iteration, he called 'the little grey cells'. You can't collect your evidence before you begin thinking, he meant: because thinking means asking questions (logicians please note), and nothing is evidence except in relation to some definite question. The difference between Poirot and Holmes in this respect is deeply significant...' IH, 281.

therefore, will differ as thought advances in time, and so it would be a mistake to presume that the past as such corresponds with the self-evident. Unlike the scissors-and-paste historian, the scientific historian knows that the 'facts' are reached not, as Ranke believed, "when we have made our minds a perfect blank"[31], but by asking intelligent questions about the subject. The question is logically prior to the source and so necessitates the act of construction.

The emphasis on construction draws attention to an important feature of the logic of question and answer: since the process of historical inquiry is now set *within* a logic of question and answer, the historian's inquiry comes to an end when the question-and-answer complex reaches its terminus. This means, of course, that testimony is decentred; it does not play the principal part in historical reconstruction; it is subordinated to the historian's question. Collingwood certainly goes too far when he states that an historian can prove his case "as conclusively as a demonstration in mathematics";[32] but this might be a piece of typical exaggeration on his part, meant only to indicate that when a further question no longer 'arises' the scientific historian knows that he has proved his case. The historical nature of the logic of questioning does not, however, mean that the problem solved by the post-critical historian will be settled once for all. It only means that for present purposes it is regarded as settled. What re-opens an historical subject is the realization that each generation asks new questions of the past in order to understand their own present.[33]

After describing scissors-and-paste history, Collingwood mentions two movements in historical method which herald its end. Both are recognisable from the lectures of 1928. One is the systematic examination of authorities to assess their credibility, and to establish critical principles according to which this assessment is to be carried out. The other is the use of non-literary sources, such as archaeological remains. The first did not, according to Collingwood, overstep the limits of scissors-and-paste history, but permanently altered its character. Critical history turned authorities into sources by insisting that nothing is to be accepted until its credibility has been inquired into. The word 'source' indicates that it contains a statement, without any implication as to its value. The methods of historical criticism were intended to solve the problem of value: that is, critical principles were applied in order to see which statements were to be incorporated into the narrative and which left out. The second movement involving the use of non-literary sources was totally hostile to scissors-and-paste history. Not containing reliable statements, the question put to a non-literary source was not whether it is true or false - whether it mirrors or does not mirror the historical reality in question - but what it means: that is, what purpose did the artefact serve, which is to say, what does it reveal about the beliefs, intentions

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[31]IH, 274.
[32]IH, 262.
[33]IH, 248.

and motives of those who made or used it? "And to ask what it means is to step right outside the world of scissors-and-paste history into a world where history is not written by copying out the testimony of the best sources, but by coming to your own conclusions."[34]

It follows that the key to the difference between Collingwood's earlier account of critical history and his later account, is the distinction he makes between 'source' and 'evidence'. While in the earlier lectures he saw that the idea of the 'source' enabled the historian to make an autonomous statement, in 'Historical Evidence' he draws the conclusion that using the word 'source' still demonstrates a 'scissors-and-paste' attitude to historical reconstruction. The word 'source' is said to be misleading because a source "means something from which water or the like is drawn ready made".[35] Such a view, already implicit in the lectures from 1928, fosters the idea that "the books mentioned in a bibliography for the use of a scissors-and-paste historian will be, roughly speaking, valuable in direct proportion to their antiquity ..."[36] In other words, the scissors-and-paste historian is interested in the antiquity of sources because it is believed that, being closer to the 'event', the testimony they contain will correspond to the reality as it once was (Ranke).

This down-grading of critical history, which is occasioned by working out the implications of the principle of autonomy, is at first sight contradictory. In 'Historical Evidence', for example, Collingwood equates 'sources' with what in 1928 he called 'authorities'. A further complication is that in the lectures from 1928 Collingwood distinguishes critical history from 'scissors-and-paste' history,[37] whereas in 'Historical Evidence' each is equated with the other. Yet such contradictions dissolve somewhat once they are seen in the light of Collingwood's critique of Bradley.

The correlation between questioning and evidence in 'Historical Evidence' has the same status as the correlation between questioning and sources in the earlier lectures. In the lectures from 1928, for example, treating statements as sources enabled the historian to make autonomous statements. This means that what was understood as critical history in 1928 is what is meant by 'scientific' history in 1939. So we can say with Collingwood that "[i]f history means scientific history, for 'source' we must read 'evidence'."[38] In other words, the critical history of 1928 is not the 'critical' history outlined in 'Historical Evidence' which "has to do with ready-made statements", about which the historian asks "whether he shall accept them or not."[39] Rather, the

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[34]IH, 260.
[35]IH, 277.
[36]IH, 280.
[37]OPH, 487f.
[38]IH, 279.
[39]IH, 274.

critical history which is rejected is that which, according to Collingwood, characterizes Bradley's essay.

In the Inaugural Collingwood stated that Bradley's account of critical history, with its reliance on the principle of analogy, had only reached autonomy in principle not in practice.[40] In practice analogy fails, not only because it was a scientific criterion instead of an historical criterion but because it was used to enable the historian to differentiate between true and false statements. That is to say, it is not an autonomous criterion because once the credibility of testimony had been established the historian still accepted this testimony *on its own authority*. Collingwood's point, which is reiterated in 'Historical Evidence', is not that the historian cannot ever accept testimony, but that it can only be accepted in so far as it is used as evidence. The rejection of the 'source' because of its equation with the ready-made, makes the idea that the historian's question is logically prior to the source explicit. This not only broadens the field of evidence beyond its restriction to testimony (a point already made in the earlier lectures[41]), but also escapes the limitation of historical authenticity to the correlation between testimony and fact. The real question to ask, in Collingwood's view, is therefore, not whether a statement is true or false, nor 'On what conditions can testimony be accepted?', but 'What does it mean?' It follows that everything (not just testimony) we observe in relation to the problem under review can be used as evidence, and that testimony need not be discarded simply because it is not historically authentic. Rather, even statements which are obviously unauthentic can still be used as evidence for the *historian's* account of the past. The rejection of the word 'source' is, therefore, not to be understood as a rejection of history's necessary relation to empirical data; on the contrary Collingwood is making a philosophical point: Bradley's understanding of historical criticism is empirical in so far as it assesses the content of a statement, i.e. whether it is true or not. The logic of question and answer is a philosophical activity which assesses the meaning of a statement or piece of evidence. It is the latter that presupposes the autonomy of the historian and corresponds to the distinction within evidence between 'what it says' (source) and 'what it means' (evidence). In other words, whereas for Bradley's critical historian, the constructive side of history has only ornamental value - a skeletal interpolation between ready-made statements of fact - for Collingwood's 'post-critical' historian, construction is by necessity structural. Autonomy has its basis within the presupposition that nothing exists ready-made.

A statement such as the last has obvious benefits for historical science. The realization that, unlike the poet, the historian always works toward his object *via* reconstruction means that there is a difference of 'category' between poetry and history. While, as we shall see, each share common fictional elements, history must give an account of how the past, in its event-like

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[40]IH, 240.
[41]LPH, 386.

character, happened. On this score, Bradley's use of the principle of analogy is inadequate, because the appeal to what could happen as against what did happen fails to distinguish history from fiction. Secondly, to be independent of the ready-made is a positive development, because it means that the historical narrative is wholly the work of the historian not simply his interpolation of ready-made statements. This equates autonomy with the creativity of narrative which goes beyond any simple resort to empirical methods. Post-critical history always goes beyond the immediately given through the use of a question-answer complex by which the historian attempts to substantiate his picture of the past. Such is the tenor of the fable 'Who killed John Doe?' canvassed in 'Historical Evidence'.[42] This is where the empirical nature of critical history reaches its limits. In only asking the question, 'Is this statement true or false?', the critical historian mistakes the criticism of sources for the essence of history.[43] By contrast, to ask the question, 'What does this statement mean?' is to presuppose that the historian has a question of his own which drives the inquiry beyond the statement at hand. History-proper, therefore, 'creates' an object which, independently of reconstruction, would not exist. The conclusion to draw from this is that, for Bradley, 'method' is being used in a metaphysical sense. History in its critical phase corresponds to knowledge of a closed totality of objects. This is what resolving the unknown into the known means.

While advantageous to historical science, the opposition between autonomy and the ready-made is problematic for hermeneutics. In the first place, the epistemological caste which Collingwood imposes upon the logic of question and answer obscures hermeneutical themes. Even though each generation questions the past in order to understand their own present, Collingwood fails to give any indication that the past can also question us. He does realize that asking questions in the right order presupposes that a question 'arises' in so far as it based upon prior knowledge;[44] however, he is so focused upon autonomy that the process of interpretation is characterized as a subjective act *on* the text. But in the realm of historical science this is legitimate. Take, for example, his rejection of the word 'source'. He dismisses such a word because it implies 'something from which water or the like is drawn ready made'. This is a perfect illustration of the critical attitude central to the Enlightenment, but it is also central and of genuine benefit to historical science. Gadamer, for his part, gives the word 'source' a positive meaning, because it presupposes the idea of the ready made or the text as a world of and to itself.[45] This 'poetic turn' of hermeneutics towards the givenness of tradition is, of course, crucial as a corrective of the 'disposal' of tradition encouraged by the Enlightenment's stress on the light

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[42]IH, 266-76.

[43]In OPH Collingwood states: "These archaeological sciences are the *sine qua non* of critical history. They are not themselves history; they are only methods of dealing with sources...", 490.

[44]IH, 273, 281; *Speculum Mentis*, 79.

[45]TM, 457. Gadamer detects this understanding of source in Plato's *Phaedrus*, 245c.

of reason. Yet this approach is short-circuited by historical science in its appeal to reconstruction. If the historian accepts the ready-made he must forfeit the name historian; at best he becomes a compiler of testimony. This is because historical criticism treats texts as sources (as fragments lacking finality) which are interpreted only in order to reach a conception of the historical object in question. The motive force of history is not the demonstration of present meaning, but the discovery of what really happened. And yet this submersion within epistemology restricts the historian's field of vision. The historian tends, on this view, to treat tradition as a text, as a 'material object' that embodies meaning. The text, as a source, is then 'dissected' or 'atomised', indicating that the historian is the one who stands at the bar of judgement. This means that the historian stands 'outside' his subject-matter, in the centre perhaps, but with each text akin to an atom standing to him and each other in purely external relations. Such a view of interpretation fosters the idea that the subject exists *in vacuo* deciding between texts (traditions) willy-nilly. Yet the beauty of Gadamer's thesis of 'effective-history' is that tradition, following M. Heidegger, becomes an ontological force which carries all within itself. This is what makes hermeneutics, in so far as it is characterized as a reflection on historicality, a 'metacritical' comment upon the work of the historian. Together with the subjective process of interpretation as an act *on* the text, there is an objective process of tradition which is the act *of* the text. As 'effective-history', tradition is not a 'material object', but always notation standing in need of interpretation.

Collingwood, for his part, has already revealed an acute sensitivity to the effective force of tradition. It is, therefore, only a question of how the relation between an autonomous historical science and hermeneutics is to be worked out. This is a task of the next chapter. Collingwood's bias towards historical science does, however, present the next chapter with two options. If we assume the general validity of hermeneutics, either there exists a dialectic between historical science and hermeneutics, or the intimate relationship that exists between historical science and the modern picture of the self needs to be abandoned.

Let us turn now from a consideration of Chapter 6 back to the subject of the present chapter.

§ 6. The Historical Imagination

The main concern of Collingwood's Inaugural is to demonstrate that the criterion for the justification of an historical inference is the *a priori* imagination. That is to say, "neither the raw material of historical knowledge, the detail of the here-and-now as given him in perception, nor the various endowments that serve him as aids to interpreting this evidence, can give the historian his criterion of historical truth. That criterion is the idea of history itself: the idea of an imaginary picture of the past."[46] Critics of Collingwood suspect the influence of 'defective idealistic

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[46]IH, 248.

theories'[47] in such a conception, especially when he reinforces it by saying that "the idea is, in Cartesian language, innate; in Kantian language, *a priori*."[48] Ricoeur, for example, describes the "idealism inherent in the thesis of an a priori imagination [as] break[ing] out"[49] when Collingwood declares: "the ... historical imagination [is] a self-dependent, self-determining, and self-justifying form of thought."[50]

Such criticism is justified as soon as Collingwood extends the scope of imagination beyond its epistemological role in historical research. Even allowing for a distinction between an 'empirical' concept of history and a 'philosophical', the idea that historical imagination is an innate idea which is imposed by nature from within, comes perilously near to an identification of man's historical existence with the actual work of the historian.[51] This is a consequence of the fact that history often means, in Collingwood's view, modern historical consciousness.

Secondly, the demand for autonomy seems to give the historian a licence to 'make history'. P. Bagby, for example, complains of "extensive flights of the imagination" in Collingwood's historical works. He refers, in particular, to Collingwood's account of King Arthur, in which, "out of a minimum of facts, he creates a new Arthurian Legend, worthy to stand beside the inventions of Tennyson and Geoffrey of Monmouth."[52] Even a friendly critic like Mink probably speaks for many readers when he expresses his concern that if imagination is the criterion of historical accounts, surely this destroys the distinction between history and fiction, and justifies subjectivity and idiosyncrasy.[53] Collingwood appears to advocate such when he states: "I am now driven to confess that there are for historical thought no fixed points thus given: in other words, that in history, just as there are properly speaking no authorities, so there are properly speaking no data."[54] On the strength of this statement C. A. J. Coady has accused Collingwood of rejecting history's necessary relation to historical data.[48] But just as his rejection of the word 'source' does not mean he rejects empirical remains, so his rejection of data is best understood as a claim about the historian's autonomy: not an autonomy from historical remains, such that history is constructed solely *via* the *a priori* as with Hegel, but an autonomy with a basis in coming to your own conclusions. A datum is historically dumb, it is a source that is turned into evidence by historical thought.

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[47]Bagby, *Culture*, 68-9; Buchdahl, 'Logic and History, 106; Ricoeur, TN 3, 144-47; Winch, *The Idea*, 90.
[48]IH, 248.
[49]TN 3, 307 n. 13.
[50]IH, 249.
[51]MacKinnon, 'Review of IH', 251.
[52]Bagby, *Culture*, 68-9.
[53]Mink, *Mind*, 159-60.
[54]IH, 243.
[48]Coady, 'Collingwood and Historical Testimony', 421.

When viewed as an epistemological device, the idea of an 'imaginary picture of the past' loses its metaphysical associations and becomes, in my view, a sound principle of historiography. The purpose of Collingwood's astonishing statements is to set out the grounds of historical inference. By describing the historical imagination as *a priori* he shows it to be a condition of history that the historian cannot call into question, because it serves as the means for gaining historical knowledge. What he means is that it is particularly suited to establish the continuity and coherence (in Gallie's terminology, 'followability'[55]) of a narrative. In the first place, the imagination fills the gaps, so to speak, between events by providing a narrative connection. Secondly, as a structural principle, 'the picture of the past' "has to justify the sources used in its construction... credence is given to them, only because they are in this way justified."[56] In other words, the criterion of the historian's judgement is the coherence of his narrative.

The most interesting feature of Collingwood's account of the historical imagination is how close he brings the historian's work to that of the novelist's. The distinction between history and fiction appears to vanish only to re-emerge when Collingwood introduces the concept of evidence. The analogy Collingwood draws between the historian and the novelist is intended to show that the historian is, like the novelist, free with regard to the construction of a narrative. Blurring the distinction between history and fiction is an audacious step in so far as it appears to contradict one of Collingwood's criticisms of the principle of analogy. Ever since Aristotle history has been the model for the realism of representation. The imaginary is defined in opposition to the real. That is to say, fiction concerns the possible, history has to do with the real.[57] However, contrary to Mink, Collingwood is sensitive to the distinction between fiction and history (his criticism of the principle of analogy demonstrates this). Nevertheless, in view of the importance of the historical imagination, he pushes in the opposite direction in the Inaugural.

Collingwood focuses his account upon the 'imaginary' which is not opposed to the real or the unreal; it is neither real nor unreal. By this step he blurs Aristotle's distinction between the real and the possible. Yet his immediate target is the empiricist account of history that too narrowly defined the real as the perceived. In so doing the 'empirical' historian simply by-passes the importance of narrative construction and moves straight on to the correspondence between fact and statement. But the historian is too *implicated* in the reconstruction to rest easy with such a naïve account of correspondence. Defining historical imagination as neither real nor unreal allows Collingwood to identify the *a priori* imagination with the work of historical inference. His refusal to oppose the imaginary and the real not only broadens the notion of the 'real' to what can be reconstructed, but dissociates the imaginary from the fictitious and arbitrary. This in turn

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[55]Gallie, *Philosophy*, 22.
[56]IH, 245.
[57]Ricoeur, TN 1, 162f.

gives credibility to his account of inference. When Collingwood says that "what is inferred is essentially something imagined"[58], he means that the past, though neither perceptibly real nor purely fictitious, can be narrated.

This appeal to the imagined which provides the historian with his narrative structure or his 'picture of the past', has an important connection with the logic of question and answer. Collingwood's critics, to my mind, have failed to notice this connection. The clue to the connection is found in *Speculum Mentis*. In a short but extremely illuminating section entitled 'Knowledge as Question and Answer', Collingwood equates the asking of questions with the activity of imagination:

> The activity of questioning is a puzzle to empiricist theories of knowledge because in it we seem to contemplate an object which does not necessarily exist, and empiricism believes that it is only because an object really exists that it has, so to speak, the force to imprint itself upon our mind or engage our attention. But we never ask a question without to some degree contemplating the non-existent; for asking a question means envisaging alternatives, and only one at most of these alternatives can really exist. Thus questioning is essentially a suspension of the activity of asserting, and that is how we have defined the aesthetic experience or imagination.[59]

This fits well with the stress on 'scientific' history as a constructive enterprise building up a picture of the past *via* a question-answer complex; for in *Speculum Mentis*, the questioning activity is only true questioning when it "looks forward to a renewal of ... assertion ... in the form of an answer."[60] The identification of questioning with imagination means, therefore, that Collingwood's appeal to the imagination as the ground of historical inference, and his account of the logic of question and answer are compatible in themselves; for while the correlation between question and answer pertains to the progressive construction of a picture of the past, the *a priori* imagination simply provides the overall structure within which this is carried out. But this is not wholly adequate, because a general question like 'Who killed John Doe?' can stand as the principle of structure which is then fleshed out by other questions. As Collingwood declares: "No one with any grasp of method will go on asking the same question all the time, 'Who killed John Doe?' He asks a new question everytime."[61] As he says elsewhere, the question, 'Who killed John Doe?' "is only a summary of all these [questions] taken together. It is not a separate question asked at a separate time, nor is it a sustained question which I continue to ask ..."[62] The use of a general question provides an even tighter fit between the *a priori* imagination and the logic of

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[58]IH, 241.
[59]SM, 78.
[60]SM, 78-9.
[61]IH, 273.
[62]A, 32.

question and answer, because it has a structural capacity that can be used as a guide in historical research.

Bringing fiction and history so close, such that the latter is shown to possess the same structure as the former, means that, for Collingwood, there is an 'overlap of class' between fiction and history in terms of narrative structure. The gap between the real and the possible is bridged once the identity between testimony (as ready-made history) and naïve correspondence is abandoned. It follows that the justification of historical inference is to be found in the structure that history shares with fiction.

§ 7. History and Fiction

At the outset, it is clear that once the naïve opposition between the real and the imaginary is removed, a difficulty presents itself with regard to establishing the proper relationship between history and fiction. The problem is made more complex if both history and fiction are subsumed without residue under the concept of narrative. After this step has been taken the referential dimension of history - its relation to the real past - is in danger of disappearing, because once bound to the narrative mode it becomes increasingly difficult to escape the idea that history is about 'sense' rather than 'reference'. If narrative is allowed to encompass the whole field of historical discourse, the problematic of reference becomes synonymous with the lack of a vocabulary able to describe history's relation to the past. This latter difficulty is consequent upon collapsing history's referential element into the dimension of sense that history shares with fictional narrative. It is, however, impossible to extinguish history's relation to narrative: it is at all points a necessary characteristic. Be that as it may, it is, I think, clear that a complete description of history cannot be achieved if history is simply understood as a species of the genus story.[63] A sole emphasis on narrative is insufficient; it will not silence historians adamant that the narratives they write refer to the past. This is not to be taken as an apology for analytical philosophy of history with its laudable concern for the epistemological structure of historical explanation. The emphasis on epistemology does, of course, testify to a distinction between narrative and history that I believe fundamental; but I do not want to oppose a 'scientific' account to a 'narrative' account, because this assumes that only 'science' can deliver a referential intention. This would be to take a step back, acquiescing in the idea that the logic of historical explanation is independent of narrative form. The real intention is to testify to the 'interweaving of history and fiction'[64] while emphasising the ontological import (the 'givenness') of the past.

The ambiguous relationship between history and fiction is captured by Collingwood in his Inaugural Lecture. To begin with he emphasizes the quasi-identity between fiction and history

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[63]Gallie, *Philosophy*, 66.

[64]See Ricoeur TN 1- 3, *passim*.

in order to demonstrate their resemblance as narrative forms. At the end of the lecture, however, he introduces history's relation to the past *via* the use of evidence in order to safeguard Aristotle's criterion. Collingwood's own attempt to distinguish 'what could happen' (the possible) from 'what did happen' (the real) is suggestive of the problems encountered when an attempt is made to distinguish fiction and history on narrative grounds alone. He criticizes Bradley's use of the principle of analogy because it cannot tell us what did happen, but only what could happen. Yet on more than one occasion Collingwood identifies 'what did happen' with the idea of necessity borrowed from fictional narrative. The idea of 'what did happen' is equivalent to the internal necessity of a narrative. Collingwood comments:

> the historian's picture of the past is thus in every detail an imaginary picture, and its necessity is at every point the necessity of the *a priori* imagination. Whatever goes into it, goes into it not because his imagination passively accepts it, but because it actively demands it. The resemblance between the historian and the novelist, to which I have referred, here reaches its culmination. Each of them makes it his business to construct a picture which is partly a narrative of events, partly a description of situations, exhibition of motives, analysis of characters. Each aims at making his picture a coherent whole, where every character and every situation is so bound up with the rest that this character in this situation cannot but act in this way, and we cannot imagine him as acting otherwise.[65]

The idea of necessity cannot, then, be the criterion that serves to distinguish history from fiction. Not only does it serve to illustrate the peculiar identity between history and fiction as modes of narrative, it also shows that fiction cannot be strictly opposed to history. The imaginary is the mode of presentation rather than the 'purely' fictitious or the wholly 'real'. History and fiction, then, cannot be distinguished on criteria internal to narrative because both history and fiction are being classified from within that genre. But if we are to speak of the referential function of history without jettisoning its character as narrative, then it must be approached, if possible, *via* its established parameters rather than by any recourse to direct correspondence. Collingwood, I think, demonstrates his sensitivity to this in his use of the phrase the 'historian's picture of the past'. A clue to what I have in mind is suggested by Collingwood's comparison between a painting and the historian's picture.

> The historian who tries to work on the common-sense theory, and accurately reproduce what he finds in his authorities, resembles a landscape-painter who tries to work on that theory of art which bids the artist copy nature. He may fancy that he is reproducing in his own medium the actual shapes and colours of natural things; but however hard he tries to do this he is always selecting, simplifying, schematizing, leaving out what he thinks unimportant and putting in what he regards as essential. It is the artist, and not nature, that is responsible for what goes into the picture.[66]

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[65]IH, 245.
[66]IH, 236.

By emphasizing the similarity between the artist's picture and the historian's 'picture of the past' Collingwood is drawing attention to the fact that there is no original with which to compare either picture. The artist is not providing his audience with a copy by which to make a comparison. In advancing a 'picture of the past' prior to verification, Collingwood wants to show that it is the 'picture' that provides the medium by which the historian comes to verify his construction. It is with this 'picture' that the historian 'does the entire work of historical construction'. Here the idea of 'internal necessity' is at its most significant both with regard to history and fiction. By emphasizing the necessity that governs a construction, Collingwood is appealing to the idea of implication expressed earlier: it is the historian who constitutes his subject as a possible object of thought by the construction of his 'picture of the past'. While the criterion of internal necessity cannot be used to distinguish history from fiction, Collingwood is, therefore, right to stress narrative necessity, because it draws attention to the peculiar relation between historical narrative and the past. Like the novelist, the historian's (re)construction is a fiction in the sense that it has no original from which to make a comparison. But this is not the whole story. While it can be said that history is a form of fiction, it does not follow that history can be collapsed into fiction. The aim is not to democratize fictional narrative and historical narrative so that each can be said to be equally valid ways of envisaging the *historical* past. Yet the real issue is not so much how history and fiction are to be absolutely distinguished, but how history is to understand its own referential intention above and beyond the fictional resources it employs.

In consequence, is it possible to say that bereft of any original, history's referential dimension is best described along the lines of convention? In the case of historical narrative, convention establishes that "things must have happened *as* they are told in a narrative such as this one."[67] Readers, then, have quite definite *empirical* expectations of historical narratives. However, there are two possible ways of interpreting such a remark: a 'strong' sense and a 'weak' sense. The 'strong' sense is a 'linguistic idealism' which, while certainly seductive, is in danger of reducing the past to its interpretation and appropriation. Such a strategy, at work in Hayden White but more so in the school of post-structuralism,[68] replaces the 'real' with the 'trace' and therefore puts the emphasis on an infinite telling which displaces or even destroys the element of givenness in history. This 'strong' sense lacks the ontological dimension that many historians would want to safeguard. Furthermore, it is, I think, an attempt to 'democratize' the methods of representation through the insinuation of fiction into historical methods, in order to provide (obviously with explosive social and political consequences for good or ill) a commonality of expectation for all literary constructions. That is to say, the *empirical* expectations of a historical narrative, while perhaps legitimate, are reduced to another form of *fiction*. There are no criteria

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[67]Ricoeur, TN 3, 154. Ricoeur is commenting upon the work of Hayden White.
[68]J. Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play'.

for saying one is better than another apart from a preference which veils an 'interested' party or power. But in an age of 'popular culture' why then bother to write academic history at all if it is simply an expression of 'power', since its impact is perhaps weaker than the power of film or television? Implicit in such a scheme is the move away from accounts with differing legitimacy and justification, to the position of saying that all 'interests' have an equal right to be heard. The end result of this 'tyranny of fiction' is the denial that the text refers to something outside itself. In older parlance, it is a denial of 'objectivity'. Objectivity, if anything, is simply equivalent to the representation of group 'interest'. In other words, what the historian's research represents is present 'interest' not past reality. Therefore, the end result of historical research is the new reality of the historian's text and not objective knowledge of a past reality.[69]

The 'weak' sense can be evinced from Ricoeur's emphasis upon historical narrative as the 'method' of 'representing' the past.[70] In other words, in the 'weak' sense the phrase can be made to encapsulate the 'givenness' appropriate to history. While the 'object' of history is the past, this past is not an object at all in the sense understood in perception. The 'weak' sense is flexible enough to show that while it may be the case that the 'picture of the past' is the historian's, unlike in art, the historical imagination is subordinated to the pursuit of the past: the imagination discloses what has been. The emphasis, then, is not simply upon the narrative but upon the methods governing the use of evidence. While, in other words, the work of present construction is essential, it must not be forgotten that the past itself, in the form of evidence in the present, exercises a 'gravitational pull' on the historian's inquiry.

Perhaps from this angle Collingwood's understanding of autonomy can be appealed to. Collingwood places the burden of responsibility upon the historian. Autonomy must not be understood as an arbitrary measure, but is a direct criticism of the notion of imitation. Imitation presupposes some 'original' and as such leads to the idea of 'authorities'. But since Collingwood has exploded the idea of ready-made history the idea of imitation loses its foothold. Re-enactment does not presuppose an 'original', because until the historian has reconstructed the past no object exists.[71] It follows from this that autonomy bids the historian plunge into the work of

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[69]For very forceful arguments against such ideas see, D. Shemilt, 'Review Essay of *Learning History*'.
[70]Compare Ricoeur's way of characterising historical narrative with Wittgenstein's remark: "We predicate of the thing what lies in the method of representing it." *Philosophical Investigations*, § 104. White is on to the same idea: "I will consider the historical work as what it most manifestly is - that is to say, a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of *explaining what they were by representing* them", *Metahistory*, 2, his emphasis. Collingwood's 'picture of the past' is a 'prototype' of this argument.
[71]"This activity is a free activity. It differs *toto caelo* from the imitativeness which may induce a man... to do what others do because these others are observed to be doing it. For the historian does not observe others to be doing the things he does over again. Until he has done them over again he does not know what they are. It is only after I have grasped the idea of specific gravity that I can see what it was that

construction. However, this is only one side of the concept of autonomy. Having no authorities, the historian does not simply invent something wholly without reference to reality. The burden of responsibility that rests upon the historian's shoulders is such that he must be attentive to the 'gravitational pull' of the reality of the past, correlating his construction to what the evidence obliges him to believe. From the sources the historian must reconstruct the reality they seek to unfold, obscure, misrepresent. In fact, it is Collingwood's belief that the object of the sources is not some *passive* individual or *dead* action. On the contrary, the action or individual represented in the sources is that which actively shapes and controls the interpretation.[72] It is from this angle that the idea of the past living on in the present receives added significance.

The idea of 'what did happen', then, has a dual function in history. On the one hand, it corresponds to the internal necessity of the narrative that constructs characters and situations, developing them in the only way they can develop, while on the other, it refers to the necessary correlation between the historian's construction and the evidence at his disposal. The historian is, as Collingwood so well brought out, in the position of a judge. As such he must prove that one explanation is better than another. Collingwood expresses this by saying that, unlike purely imaginary worlds that cannot clash and need not agree, each being a world to itself, there is only one historical world in which everything stands in relation to something else.[73] In other words, the historian's most important task is to seek evidence for a historical reconstruction. Here Collingwood reveals a deep sensitivity to historical method. While he emphasizes the continuity and coherence of the historian's narrative, Collingwood has in view the problem of *re*construction. Following the assumption of a logic of question and answer whereby "propositions about the past are *tested against* rather than *founded upon* historical sources"[74] it is ill conceived to think that a theory of correspondence characterizes historical accounts. Rather, the *justification* of historical accounts is related to "what the evidence obliges us to believe"[75] where the accent on 'oblige' brings to mind the past participle *debitum*.[76] The thesis of the 'picture of the past' refers to the interweaving of imagination (*qua* coherence and continuity) with the referential nature of the evidence which the historian is obliged to recognize. It is an inquiry set within such parameters that Collingwood has in mind when he says: "The novelist has a single task only: to construct a coherent picture, one that makes sense. The historian has a double task: he has both to do this, and to construct a picture of things as they really were and of events as

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Archimedes had done when he shouted [Eureka]: I am therefore in no sense imitating Archimedes." OPH, 445.

[72]"All historical evidence is a medium through which past events have an impact on the mind of the historian." PH, 85.

[73]IH, 246.

[74]Shemilt, 'Review Essay', 267.

[75]IH, 154.

[76]*The New Leviathan*, 17. 11f.

they really happened."[77] In this respect, perhaps the verb *invenio* captures the essence of historical work.

It is evident that Collingwood's Inaugural Lecture anticipates a number of concerns that animate the discussions of narrativist-philosophers who have come after him.[78] In particular, Collingwood relativises the distinction between the real and the possible by situating historical reconstruction within an imagination which is neither real (perceptible as such) nor unreal (fictitious in the prejudicial sense). Consequently, the *a priori* imagination broadens the field of the real to what can be narrated, and successfully combats the prejudice that fiction has no hold upon reality. The imagination becomes the fundamental principle of historical reconstruction. Its peculiar nature - neither wholly real nor purely fictitious - captures the problematic of history exactly: it is necessary both for continuity, and to render the past explicit. Furthermore, Collingwood's understanding of the historical imagination testifies to the past as an *absence* (in the sense of 'conspicuous by its absence') which generates a 'gravitional pull' that must be given its due.

(II)

Agency and the Concept of Empathy

§ 1. The Rationale of Actions

In this and the two previous chapters I have tried to show that the doctrine of re-enactment incapsulates the central elements of Collingwood's idea of historical understanding. That is to say, while it would be a mistake to interpret the doctrine as a methodological procedure, in its capacity as the telos of history, re-enactment incorporates a methodology. Re-enactment is not to be identified with reconstruction from evidence, but forms a two-sided protocol that on the one hand, directs the reconstruction of the historical agent's situation, and on the other, provides the means for judging whether the account of the agent's action is appropriate. Both these elements form two distinct, but inseparable, logical components of re-enactment.

The main objection to the use of the concept of empathy in historical understanding is that it does not belong to the logic of historical explanation. In the first place, it is described as a species of intuition whereby the historian uncovers facts about an historical event that cannot be gained from the reconstruction of evidence. Empathy is not, however, an alternative to the acquisition of facts *via* historical reconstruction. A second account of empathy bids the historian imagine himself in the place of the agent, and *via* this imaginary identification attribute his own view of the situation to the agent. This account of re-enactment has the merit of not confusing it with historical reconstruction, but it fails to distinguish the distinct logical elements involved. The

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[77]IH, 246.

[78]Ricoeur, TN 3 Vols.; White, *Metahistory*.

failure to distinguish between the logical elements is consequent upon the prejudice, recently overthrown, that the only valid form of explanation was explanation by general laws. For theorists like Hempel and Popper re-enactment is, at best, a heuristic device, that provides a kind of intuitive check of the success of explanation by general laws.[79] The same failure to distinguish between the logical elements is true of Gadamer's dissociation of understanding from 'empathy'. This dissociation is predicated on the assumption that understanding is a 'semantic' category while empathy is a 'psychological' category.[80] However, this dissociation has its basis within a mistaken assumption about the particular role re-enactment is thought to play in the constitution of understanding.

Distinguishing between the logical components of re-enactment has the merit of separating the first stage of historical explanation from the second. In the first stage, the historian, by the interpretation of evidence, reconstructs how the historical agent saw the situation in which he was placed. In the second stage, having reconstructed the situation of the agent, the historian 'displays the *rationale* of what was done' by showing that the action in question was the most appropriate given what is known about the agent's beliefs about the situation. It is this second stage which corresponds to the use of empathy. Here the real point of emphasising the standpoint of the agent becomes apparent. The historian does not envisage the agent's situation in order to find out new information corresponding to the agent's motives and reasons for acting. Rather, the projection metaphor is drawing attention to a point of logic:

> Only by putting yourself in the agent's position can you *understand* why he did what he did... Its function is not to remind us of how we come to know certain facts, but to formulate, however tentatively, certain conditions which must be satisfied before the historian is prepared to say: 'Now I have the explanation.'[81]

To accept the thesis that empathy is a psychological doctrine and hence simply a heuristic device is, according to Dray, to obliterate a distinction between explanation types: "a distinction between representing something as the thing generally done, and representing it as the appropriate thing to have done."[82] Understood semantically rather than psychologically, the projection metaphor is an attempt to illustrate that the supposed choice between a literal identity and neutral observation is fallacious. In terms of the two explanation types sketched above, the choice is between seeking the most appropriate language depending upon what it is that you want to explain. To think of the projection metaphor in this way dissociates empathy, and by implication, re-enactment from a

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[79]Hempel, 'The Function of', 352; Popper, 'A Pluralist Approach', 147.
[80]TM, 39. Despite Gadamer, the understanding of empathy advanced in this thesis is derived from analytical philosophy's preoccupation with establishing the *logic* of explanation by re-enactment. As such empathy is a semantic category rather than a psychological category.
[81]Dray, *Laws and Explanation*, 128, his emphasis.
[82]LAE, 128.

preoccupation with numerical identity. The point of the identification metaphor is not to provide the historian with an identical 'image' of the agent's situation which he then proceeds to play out in his own 'internal theatre', but is an invitation to relate this metaphor to a certain type of language used in the explanation of purposive actions. Such language is exemplified by the second of Dray's explanation types. What the projection metaphor seeks to comprehend is the *rational force* of an action; it does not seek to discover the internal motives and reasons of an agent as things existing independently of and prior to an action. The historian displays the historical agent's action through the interweaving of narrative necessity and evidence and in so doing will hopefully, if it is a coherent and continuous narrative, enable the reader to envisage the situation in which the agent stood.

Collingwood gives as an example the account of an historian reading the Theodosian Code. In order to understand it more is needed than the mere reading and translating of certain edicts of the emperor. In order to understand its significance, the historian "must envisage the situation with which the emperor is trying to deal, and he must envisage it as that emperor envisaged it."[83] In other words, through the interpretation of evidence, the historian has to re-create the emperor's thought, in particular, the element of situational awareness in it. "Then he must see for himself, just as if the emperor's situation were his own, how such a situation might be dealt with; he must see the possible alternatives, and the reasons for choosing one rather than another."[84] This second stage of re-thinking is what Collingwood conceived as empathetic. This version of empathy does not recommend that the historian imagine reasons for a course of action; rather, the historian is to imagine alternative courses of action and to measure these against the reasons which the agent presumably had, as indicated by the evidence.[85] That is to say, what we very often want is a reconstruction of the agent's *calculation* of means to be adopted toward his chosen end in the light of the circumstances in which he found himself.[86] To explain the action we need to know what considerations convinced him that he should act as he did. However, what is important to reiterate is that the agent need not have, on this model, propositionally rehearsed, either aloud or silently, alternative courses of action and reasons for action before he acted. But, according to Dray, such an admission need not affect the main point; "for in so far as we say an action is purposive at all, no matter at what level of conscious deliberation, there is a calculation which could be constructed for it... And it is by eliciting some such calculation that we explain the action."[87] Re-enactment, in other words, is a semantic rather than psychological category; but this does not exclude the crucial importance of the agent's own beliefs, purposes and principles. It

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[83]IH, 283.
[84]IH, 283.
[85]Martin, *Historical Explanation*, 53.
[86]LAE, 122.
[87]LAE, 123.

is from such a standpoint that the historian is provided with the means by which he can make an action intelligible.

§ 2. Concluding Remarks

This completes the attempted integration of the doctrine of re-enactment with historical causation and inference. The focus of this chapter has been on what we might call the historical intention of re-enactment. I expressed this by saying that the historian, using the traces of the past in the present, argues from the imaginary to the real. That is to say, the imagination discloses what has been. This is a necessary characteristic of history. All the same, simply focusing upon the historical intention of re-enactment, as in the analytic school, is not enough. Collingwood's understanding of re-enactment cannot be placed wholly within the confines of a concern for historical explanation. There is too much evidence pointing to its hermeneutical dimension. This discloses the polarity between analytical philosophy of history and hermeneutics in general. Nothing is more noticeable than the failure of analytical philosophy of history to engage with contemporary hermeneutics. Such is the case with Dray. In his recent book on Collingwood entitled *History as Re-enactment*, there is no attempt to engage with any criticism of Collingwood from a hermeneutical perspective. Furthermore, he appears oblivious to the criticism of his own position in Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*. It is true that there is a most important convergence between the two disciplines on the question of language, but curiously, analytical philosophy of history avoids ontological assumptions preferring theoretical certainty.[88] Therefore, to allow analytical philosophy of history to define re-enactment will only exacerbate the criticism of re-enactment from a hermeneutical perspective. It cannot be wholly encompassed within a model of retrospective reconstruction. Re-enactment would then simply display an intention towards the past without any idea that understanding must exhibit itself in application to the present.

This polarity between analytical philosophy of history and hermeneutics necessitates the attempt of the next chapter to broaden the applicability of re-enactment to include the latter. At the same time we must preserve the historical intention of re-enactment that was the strength of the analytical interpretation. This and the following chapter, in other words, must be understood as two phases of the same process. Each constrains the other to an act of recognition.

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[88]This is demonstrated in Shemilt's 'Review Essay': "History is important to civilization and culture because of what it is, not because of the stories it tells. It provides the touchstone whereby we distinguish what we are entitled to believe from what we are entitled to doubt. It makes use of evidence and logic not because either is unproblematic but because these are the best materials and instruments to hand," 269. Shemilt's appeal to method is understandable in so far as he is attempting to show that postmodern approaches to history lack logical rigour and are therefore prone to dishonesty. Echoing Piaget (perhaps ironically in view of *post*-structuralism), Shemilt describes logic as "the morality of mind." (269.)

CHAPTER SIX

Re-enactment: the Intersection of History with Hermeneutics

It is enough to say that we understand in a different way, if we understand at all.[1]

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter, following the preliminary remarks in Chapter One, is to explore whether, or to what extent, Collingwood's understanding of history goes beyond the confines of Romantic hermeneutics. As the argument proceeds, the hermeneutical dimension of re-enactment will be unravelled. That there is both an historical and hermeneutical dimension to re-enactment is important. In other words, the tendency to place history in opposition to hermeneutics must be resisted. To drive a wedge between them only repeats the dualism that philosophical and theological thought should be working against. Re-enactment was described in the previous chapter as the telos of history. In this chapter I shall describe it as the telos of understanding. This is not a polarisation; rather, re-enactment is one single process containing two intentions, one towards the past, the other towards the present.

The hermeneutical dimension of re-enactment cannot even be contemplated without reference to Gadamer. In its scope the work of Gadamer is 'totalitarian' like Hegel's: a partial critique of Gadamer, given in the hope that a door may open enabling escape, does not touch the essence of his system. As with Hegel, all partial criticism is taken account of in an *Aufhebung* of consciousness. One has either to renounce *Truth and Method* or accept it. The question then might be: 'If Gadamer offers a totality, is Collingwood nothing more than a precursor, a verse in comparison with Gadamer's poem?' This is not the case. Rather, both philosophers contribute a verse to the poem that is human understanding.

The fact that Gadamer was instrumental in the translation of the *Autobiography* into German, and his praise for Collingwood's discovery of the logic of question and answer, may give the impression that he saw something of supreme importance in Collingwood.[2] But when you read what he has to say, Collingwood is - as is the case with any system - assigned a place along the evolutionary line of hermeneutical theory. It comes as no surprise that Collingwood is 'placed' in the realm of Romantic hermeneutics. I say this, because it is only in his own work that Gadamer thinks a true hermeneutics of historical consciousness is achieved. Certainly, any philosopher attracted, seduced even, by Hegel's dialectic will gravitate to such a position. *The Idea of History* bears the marks of a culmination of consciousness: Collingwood appears as the

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[1]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 264.
[2]TM, 467.

one true 'scientific' historian.[3] As Richard Rorty has said, the philosophical use of history becomes, following Hegel, a kind of self-justification of the philosophical concerns of the author of that history.[4] That apart, my concern here is to explore whether Collingwood is entangled in the problem of Romantic hermeneutics.

To be brief, what distinguishes Romantic hermeneutics from the hermeneutics of Gadamer is the recognition by the latter that understanding involves a 'fusion of horizons' (*Horizontverschmelzung*).[5] Romantic hermeneutics with its sensitivity towards historical consciousness discovered the problem of temporal distance (*Zeitabstand*). The meaning of a text is not simply 'at-hand', rather, understanding is conditioned by the text's historical context. To understand means that the interpreter must reconstruct this context. The meaning of a text on this model is its *original* meaning. It is evident that Romantic hermeneutics displays an intention towards the past. In contrast, Gadamer has shown that understanding does not have one horizon, but two. Hermeneutics in this sense recognizes that historical conditioning is two-sided: both text and interpreter stand in their own historical horizon. The basic idea here is not that the text (as past) and the interpreter (as present) are divorced one from the other by a gulf of temporal distance, but that each is related to the other in the continuity of tradition. Each horizon, in other words, is part of one greater horizon in which the text and interpreter move. Gadamer expresses this with his principle of 'effective-history' (*Wirkungsgeschichte*), by which he means that the interpreter cannot ignore the 'operation of history' on the process of understanding. This is because the interpreter forms a part of the process that he is studying. "The horizon is, rather, something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving. Thus the horizon of the past ... which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion."[6] This is a very important point, because this movement of 'effective-history' carries us with it whether we are conscious of it so doing or not: "the power of effective-history", Gadamer declares, "does not depend on its being recognized."[7] When combined with the idea of a 'fusion' between horizons, the principle of effective-history leads to the following conclusion: because both horizons of the past and present are elements in understanding, the understanding that is achieved, while in continuity with a developing tradition, will differ from the self-understanding of the past. Gadamer, therefore, unlike Romantic hermeneutics, displays an intention towards the present. This does not, however, ignore the past; rather, the past becomes a necessary element in the achievement of understanding. What is at issue in Gadamer's criticism of Romantic

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[3]Collingwood does say, however, that scientific historians can be found in the past, but only in the work of outstanding thinkers, and then only fleetingly. *The Idea of History*, 320.
[4]Rorty, 'The Historiography', 56-61.
[5]TM, 267-74.
[6]TM, 271.
[7]TM, 268.

hermeneutics is the latter's failure to relate understanding to application (*Anwendung*).[8] To think that the essence of understanding is the reconstruction of original meaning is to fail to see that understanding must involve "something like the application of the text... to the present situation of the interpreter."[9] In other words, by robbing tradition of its power, Romantic hermeneutics leaves everything as it is. But to do so is to fall under the illusion that retrieving an original meaning corresponds to understanding; rather, understanding is measured by the yardstick of appropriate practice.

Ricoeur follows Gadamer's lead and places Collingwood's philosophy of history within the confines of Romantic hermeneutics. For Gadamer this shortcoming is the result of Collingwood's failure to learn the lessons of Hegel's dialectic, thus succumbing to the idea that a 'thought' can be re-thought without loss of its identity. Yet this lapse is itself based upon Hegel's doctrine of the Absolute.[10] Like Dilthey, Collingwood attempts to escape the problem of radical historicity by succumbing to Hegel's doctrine of absolute mind. This allows Collingwood the possibility of a standpoint 'above' history where a thought can be re-thought 'outside' time. Ricoeur reaches the same conclusion, but draws out the supposed consequences of the doctrine of the self-knowledge of mind. There is a complete identity between the historian's consciousness and the object such that one cannot distinguish between the past and thought about the past. Re-enactment is simply an achronic logical structure devised to annul temporal distance.[11] As a result, in his pursuit of a complete identity between consciousness and object, Collingwood succumbs to the seduction of Romantic hermeneutics. Re-enactment is reduced to the thesis of 'original intention', such that history must always correspond to the intentions of its protagonists and the meaning of texts to authorial intention.

In Part I of this chapter I shall begin the argument against such an interpretation of re-enactment. This will involve an outline of Collingwood's idea of process which is the first principle of his philosophy of history. In Chapter 2 I demonstrated that the lectures on the idea of nature and the idea of history form a single argument. As a consequence, it is right that the idea of process should be taken as the proper background of re-enactment. This will provide an alternative reading of re-thinking which builds on ideas voiced in Chapter 3. The argument in this part will proceed *via* an analysis of *The Idea of Nature*, and show that what Collingwood called 'Renaissance' cosmology provided an analogy for work in the human sciences. It will become evident that the theory of matter that governs classical physics is transferred to the study of the past and results in what is known as Romantic hermeneutics. I shall then show that Collingwood's

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[8]TM, 274ff.
[9]TM, 274.
[10]TM, 467-69.
[11]Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* 3, 144-47.

attack on Bradley and the Realists' understanding of knowledge, that focuses on the doctrines of 'internal' and 'external' relations, belongs to this problematic.

Following this outline of classical physics and its theory of matter, I shall reiterate that Collingwood's understanding of process is governed by the idea of becoming. Like Gadamer, Collingwood's understanding of being is projective. This is a consequence of his rejection of the concept of substance. Collingwood realizes that the Cartesian dualism of matter and mind which governed classical physics must be overcome, and he sees that this is accomplished in the concept of process. This new conception enlivens the dead matter of classical physics by making time and movement fundamental rather than accidental. Motion is, in other words, seen not in relation to an observer, but relative to a horizon which includes the observer. To regard history as process, then, means that historical consciousness does not make the process, it only makes this process conscious. Placing this distance between Collingwood and Romantic hermeneutics will allow his doctrine that history is the self-knowledge of mind its proper perspective. Seen in this new light, Collingwood's doctrine, although Hegelian in origin, is similar to Gadamer's understanding of the 'fusion of horizons' which is part of the principle of effective history. Collingwood, then, as much as Gadamer, thinks that the telos of understanding is application.

With the emphasis now on appropriate action Collingwood is able to loosen his previous ties to superior knowledge and stress an understanding that mirrors contemporary needs. Thus Part II is concerned with a positive re-description of relativity. Relativity now forms the inescapable condition of understanding. In the final section of this part I shall concentrate on a specific analysis of re-thinking. Building upon the argument of Chapter 3 and part one of the present chapter, I shall argue that re-thinking past thought need not be interpreted as an attempt to achieve, in the words of Ricoeur, 'a numerical identity' between a past thought and its present re-thinking. Drawing upon an unpublished manuscript in which Collingwood discusses different senses of 're-thinking', I shall illustrate that development is essential to the doctrine of re-enactment.

In Part III I shall explore the difficult question of the relationship between history and hermeneutics. While advocating a split between them would reveal a failure to recognize that the problem of understanding has moved away from 'meaning' towards patterns of action, there does appear to be a tension between history and hermeneutics. The emphasis on present application has led W. Pannenberg to question whether Gadamer is attempting to relieve interpretation of the awkward questions associated with historical factuality.[12] Notwithstanding Pannenberg's own rather startling empiricism, the unease this move towards present meaning creates in the empirically minded is, perhaps, indicated in so far as it reawakens the older arguments against a

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[12]Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, 169.

theologian like Bultmann. But in the wake of Gadamer, the defence of 'factuality' loses its power. Philosophy and theology in their emergence from modernity are passing from a critical to a constructive phase. The displacement of criticism from absolute ascendancy of which Collingwood's philosophy is a part, brings to mind the power of narrative as a force of unity. The critical method advanced by Kant on the basis of Descartes' method of doubt, cuts off our access to tradition and so robs it of the power to articulate its own claim. Yet the suspicion is that Gadamer has, perhaps inadvertently, reduced the past simply to the status of a critical moment within an all-inclusive system. Furthermore, the abrupt transition in *Truth and Method* from history to linguisticality occasions the question: 'do we now need historical method?'

(I)

The Concept of Process and its Hermeneutical Consequences

§ 1. Renaissance Cosmology and Romantic Hermeneutics

Collingwood's insight into the historicity of understanding has been confirmed by Gadamer's approach in so far as Collingwood, like Gadamer, follows Hegel rather than Schleiermacher or Dilthey.[13] But at stake is the question whether Collingwood detached the problem of an historical hermeneutics from the consequences of Hegel's reflective philosophy. I have, to some extent, taken care of this question in so far as Collingwood's dialectic, canvassed in Chapter 1, rejects Hegel's concept of the Absolute. What I want to do in the following is draw out some of the consequences of such a rejection.

Fundamental to the achievement of a hermeneutics of historical consciousness is a thorough criticism of the concept of substance. Collingwood saw that the use of substance as a description of the historicity of existence was inadequate. Like Gadamer - who mentions that Heidegger was the first to recognize the challenge its rejection posed to historical being[14] - he realized that a criticism of substance meant an overhaul of the logical basis of knowledge hitherto. This is why Collingwood called the process of question and answer a *logic*, since the recognition of the radical historicity of understanding necessitated a new logic of thought.[15] He understood substance to be a 'substratum' in the Lockian tradition. In what follows, therefore, I

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[13]TM, 147-50, 153.

[14]TM, 214.

[15]"In logic I am a revolutionary..." *An Autobiography*, 52. In an unpublished manuscript he states: "Aristotelian logic recognises the singular judgement as one of the three kinds, universal (all S is P) particular (some S is P) and singular (this S is P). But although the singular form is recognised, its special function in history is not; for, when we come on to deal with inference, we find that this theory of the syllogism ignores the singular judgement as a special kind of judgement, and assimilates it to the universal: the judgement this S is P is treated by syllogistic theory as if it were All S is P. *Hence we may say with perfect certainty that, if there are any special logical problems attached to historical thinking, the Aristotelian logic has nothing to tell us about them.*" 'The Philosophy of History 1932', Bodleian, dep. 15, my emphasis.

shall follow this usage. This is legitimate because the 'substratum' *is* the idea behind the question 'What can be known?' Furthermore, the concept of induction, the rejection of final causes in Renaissance natural science, and the realists' insistence that 'knowing makes no difference to what is known' carry the same intention towards the fixed and unchanging. The substratum becomes a term which moves between two poles; the first approximates to an object, the second to a metaphysical idea about unconditional knowledge.

The question at issue in the conception of nature as it has come down to us is a far reaching one: 'under what conditions is knowledge possible?'[16] Common to both Greek and Renaissance cosmology was the separation of appearance from reality. The first is a constant flux which cannot be known, while the latter is a permanency which can. The Greeks sought the unchanging in a world of permanently fixed forms, while Renaissance thinkers sought permanence in their conception of matter and in uniform laws. For the purposes of this chapter I shall restrict the inquiry to the latter.

The most significant aspect of the distinction between appearance and reality, as it was worked out in the Renaissance cosmology associated with scientists like Galileo and Newton, was the rejection of teleology, and the confinement of understanding to efficient causality understood as immanent *in* nature. This had the effect of expelling life (the soul) from the world, and created classical physics by conceiving the orderly movements of nature as dead matter. Accordingly, Renaissance natural science was based on the analogy of the machine.[17] This created the idea that the world is a closed totality open to quantitative measurement alone. Such a picture of nature found classic expression in Spinoza's *Ethics*: 'in suo esse perseverare conatur'.[18] This may appear teleological, but in fact it is not. To say that everything in nature endeavours to preserve itself in its own being is to presuppose that being is simply *what it is now*. If nature is regarded as a machine, then teleology or final causation, with the attendant idea of effort on the part of nature or something in nature towards the realization of something not yet existing, must be ruled out of natural science altogether.[19] The construction of the human sciences on analogy with the natural sciences that reaches its culmination at the end of the nineteenth century extended this principle still further. The inductive logic of Mill, with its principle of reducing the unknown to the known *via* Hume's regularity thesis, becomes the essence of the historical-critical method. The conditions of Renaissance cosmology that prevented a proper hermeneutics of historical consciousness were, in other words, the same conditions that made possible the application of the critical method to history. As I demonstrated in previous chapters with regard to efficient causality (in the

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[16]*The Idea of Nature*, 11.
[17]IN, 8, 95.
[18]Spinoza, *Ethics*, iii, prop. 6, cited in IN, 15.
[19]IN, 15.

mechanistic sense) and induction, the concept of substratum is at work in so far as what is produced is always something of the same kind.

Drawing upon the analogy between Renaissance cosmology and historical understanding allows the hermeneutical dimension of this understanding to be made clear. The connection between them is to be found in the conception of matter held by Renaissance natural science. Matter was conceived, Collingwood tells us,

> as divided into solid particles moving in space. Each particle, physically considered, was atomic: that is to say, physically indivisible and indestructible... In virtue of its impenetrability it could never occupy the same place as any other particle: that is, at any given moment it had a place of its own, in which it was entirely situated and in which no other particle was contained.[20]

That a particle moves is not important to its being; rather, as atomic, a particle acts because first of all, independently of this action, it is what it is. On this view, movement is merely an accident that happens to a body.[21] This view made it difficult to conceive the proper relation between nature and mind. That is to say, if nature is a machine composed of dead matter how is mind related to it? According to Collingwood, Galileo, whose views on this subject were adopted by Descartes and Locke and became what may be called the orthodoxy of the seventeenth century, said minds form a class of beings outside nature, and the qualities of nature are explained as appearances to minds.[22] However, such a doctrine really made the problem of relation insoluble, because it was impossible to see any connection between mind and matter as thus conceived. "The corollary of such theories", Collingwood declares, "was their *reductio ad absurdum* in the view that mind could know nothing but its own states, and *ex hypothesi* the material world is not a state of mind."[23] This two-substance doctrine, and its presupposition, the principle of dead matter, infect Romantic hermeneutics.

The idea that the past (matter) was atomic and entirely situated in its own place meant that understanding was 'achieved' in the attempt to see the past on its own terms. The goal of Romantic hermeneutics was the achievement of complete contemporaneity with the past. Alternatively, if the consequences of the Renaissance understanding of the atom are thought out, the idea that knowledge of the past is inaccessible is the result. This supposed dilemma of either annulment of temporal distance or the recognition of uncrossable distance, forms the background of Collingwood's own philosophy of history.

Collingwood saw that, in his own time, this failure to recognize the historicity of understanding was rooted in Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*. The impetus of his work in the

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[20]IN, 142.
[21]IN, 147.
[22]IN, 103.
[23]IN, 112.

philosophy of history has its origin in the polemic that existed in British philosophy between Bradley on the one side, and Moore, Russell, and Cook-Wilson on the other. The important point about this polemic, according to Collingwood, was not that Moore and company relented from the doctrines contained in *Appearance and Reality*, but that Bradley bequeathed to his successors a dilemma. The difference between them was simply Bradley's acceptance of one horn of the dilemma, and Moore, Russell and Cook-Wilson's acceptance of the opposite horn. Both Bradley and his successors, in other words, defined their respective philosophies on the grounds of a shared doctrine.

Reality for Bradley was immediate experience; it has the immediacy of feeling. But thought divides; therefore, just so far as we think about reality, we deform it by destroying its immediacy, and thus thought can never grasp reality.[24] This, in Collingwood's view, bequeathed the following dilemma, a mirror image of the two-substance doctrine of the seventeenth century, to Bradley's successors:

> Either reality is the immediate flow of subjective life, in which case it is subjective and not objective, it is enjoyed but cannot be known, or else it is that which we can know, in which case it is objective and not subjective, it is a world of real things outside the subjective life of our mind and outside each other.[25]

Bradley accepted the first horn of the dilemma and the 'realists' the second horn. It is on the grounds of this shared error that Collingwood called *Appearance and Reality* "the manifesto of a new Realism".[26] Realism was not an advance on Bradley's position, only a reaction against it, due in the last resort to Bradley's own faults. In other words, Collingwood is actually attempting to go *beyond* idealism and realism; and he does this by rejecting the notion of dead matter. In fact Part IV of *The Idea of History*, is simply a sketch of the various attempts to achieve an adequate theory of history which all come to grief upon the principle of dead matter. Thus, for example, the doctrines behind the dichotomous positions of Bradley and the 'realists', what Moore described as the doctrines of 'internal' and 'external' relations,[27] are based on the principle, when used historically, that the past is an atom-like substance that exists entirely in its original context. Just as the positivism Collingwood so despised separated 'fact' from 'interpretation', such that the latter had nothing to do with the former, so these doctrines separated the past, as substratum, from time. Bradley with his doctrine of 'internal' relations did take time more seriously, but time was always something to be overcome. This is why Gadamer says that historical consciousness by itself cannot provide an adequate hermeneutics. This consciousness is an element *within* the

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[24]IH, 141.
[25]IH, 141.
[26]'The Metaphysics of F. H. Bradley', Bodleian, dep. 29.
[27]Moore, 'External and Internal Relations', 276-309.

historical process, and is not to be equated with the overcoming of temporal distance.[28] In thinking that a work torn from its context loses its meaning, the former doctrine prevents any form of mediation between past and present; while the latter's purely theoretical spirit divorces the known from the knower so completely that knowing makes no difference to present action.[29]

The problem of dead matter which overshadowed the philosophy of history up until the early decades of the twentieth century meant that philosophers, protests notwithstanding, worked on analogy with the natural scientist. This is the essence of Collingwood's quarrel with the German school of *Geschichtsphilosophie* which included Dilthey:

> It has always regarded history *as an object* confronting the historian in the same way in which nature confronts the scientist: the task of understanding... is not done by itself for itself, it is done to it by the historian standing outside it. The result of this is that the spirituality or subjectivity which properly belongs to *the historical life of mind itself* is taken away from it and given to the historian.[30]

The historian, in other words, stands outside the object, as if observing a piece of dead matter, and attempts to enliven it with his own subjectivity. Yet such an approach betrays the idea that the historical process has no meaning (subjectivity) in itself; rather, the historian is the one who imparts it. Understanding on this view will always be restricted to the idea that one must 'reactivate' dead matter by seeing it within its original context. Collingwood's pursuit of the question of the possibility of history is, therefore, an attempt to go beyond the question of method, the question of how understanding can be achieved - either by reproduction or the collection of facts - and to recognize, in Gadamer's words, 'what *always* happens'.[31]

The source of this approach is found in the essay on Bradley which Collingwood wrote at the end of 1933. In the essay, Collingwood suggests that Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*, contrary to the received interpretation, was an attempt to resolve appearance into reality. Collingwood then shows that this idea combines with Einstein's theory of relativity:

> just as Bradley found the reality of appearances not in their appearing to a mind, but in their relation to a Reality of which the human mind is itself only another appearance, thus rejecting all subjectivism and all substitution of psychology for metaphysics, so the relativistic physics, instead of making motions relative to the mind of an observer - that is a misunderstanding of it in phenomenalistic terms, rightly

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[28]TM, 268.
[29]A, 147.
[30]IH, 175f., my emphases. Gadamer says of this school, "Someone who understands tradition in this way [through method] makes it *an object*, ie he confronts it in a free and uninvolved way, and, by methodically *excluding all subjective elements in regard to it*, he discovers what it contains. We saw that he thereby detaches himself from the continuing action of tradition, in which he himself has his historical reality. It is the method of the social sciences, following the methodological ideas of the eighteenth century and their programmatic formulation by Hume, ideas that are an imitation of scientific method." TM, 322, my emphases.
[31]TM, 466, his emphasis.

rejected by its exponents - makes them relative to a frame of reference which an observer may focus if he likes on his own body.[32]

Thus, Collingwood's transcendental question goes beyond the problem of the relation between dead matter and mind and realizes that this question can be asked correctly only if it is realized that what creates the meaning of the historical process is not the historian standing outside it, but the process itself of which the historian is a part:

> the historian himself, together with the here-and-now which forms the total body of evidence available to him, is a part of the process he is studying, has his own place in that process, and can see it only from the point of view which at this present moment he occupies within it.[33]

Collingwood annuls the divorce of appearance and reality, appealing instead to the idea that reality is to be found in the flux itself: not in its recurring uniformities like Renaissance cosmology, "but in the actual sequence of the elements which make it up." Adding, "this is the principle of history, in the wider sense of that word; where history means process in time."[34] This converts the dead past into 'process', which means that the dilemma of the annulment of temporal distance or uncrossable distance is dissolved: "the past", in other words, "is not a dead past but lives on in the present."[35]

It remains to be seen whether Collingwood understood enough of these ideas to see that understanding is not achieved by plunging into the horizon of the past, but by a fusion between past and present horizons. In other words, the question is not so much whether consciousness and object are unified, because as we shall see, Gadamer believes as much; rather, at issue is whether Collingwood allows any difference to inhabit this unity. It has to be demonstrated that Collingwood thought that understanding was not telling a different story, but telling the same story differently.[36]

§ 2. The Self-Knowledge of Mind

The fundamental axiom of classical physics was the idea that matter was an atomic substratum for which motion was something external, something added to matter which already enjoyed its own proper attributes independently of such additions. But following the inclusion of life or process into the picture of nature, the dualism of matter and motion disappears. Modern physics regards matter as "possessing its own characteristics ... only because it moves; time is therefore a factor in its very being, and that being is fundamentally motion."[37] This new theory of the atom,

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[32]Collingwood, 'The Metaphysics of Bradley', dep. 29.
[33]IH, 248.
[34]Collingwood, 'Reality as History'.
[35]IH, 175.
[36]Lash, *Theology on the Way*, 183.
[37]IN, 151.

like history, resolves substance into function. The being of matter is simply activity. This reintroduces the concept of teleology into nature. The *conatus* of which Spinoza spoke is not directed towards the realization of anything not yet existing. Collingwood, therefore, replaces Spinoza's proposition with: "everything in nature tries to persevere in its own *becoming*: to continue the process of development in which, so far as it exists at all, it is already engaged."[38] This contradicts what Spinoza meant to say; for the 'being' of a thing, in Spinoza, means what it is now; and a thing engaged in a process of development is engaged in ceasing to be what it now is.

It is evident that the idea of process (activity or becoming) is appealed to in order to solve the problem of the divorce between past and present consequent upon subscribing to the concept of dead matter. This doctrine of becoming, as it applies to history, is given clear statement in the *Autobiography*.

> By about 1920 this was my first principle of a philosophy of history: that the past which an historian studies is not a dead past, but a past which in some sense is still living in the present. At the time, I expressed this by saying that history is concerned not with 'events' but with 'processes'; that 'processes' are things which do not begin and end but turn into one another; and that if a process P^1 turns into process P^2, there is no dividing line at which P^1 stops and P^2 begins; P^1 never stops, it goes on in the changed form P^2, and P^2 never begins, it has previously been going on in the earlier form P^1.[39]

The past and present are united in one process which is always in motion: always, that is, in process of 'turning into' something else.[40] This idea is summed up by Collingwood when he says: "in history the object is enacted and is therefore not an *object* at all."[41] What is striking about this is how Gadamer focuses upon the same idea. "We must here appeal from a badly understood historical thinking to one that can better perform the task of understanding. True historical thinking must take account of its own historicality. Only then will it not chase the phantom of an historical object ... but learn to see in the object the counterpart of itself and hence understand both. The true historical object is not an *object* at all, but the unity of the one and the other, a relationship in which exist both the reality of history and the reality of historical understanding."[42] Like Collingwood, Gadamer sees that the atomic past can never lead to understanding because "this acknowledgement of the otherness of the other, which makes him

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[38]IN, 16, his emphasis.
[39]A, 97f.
[40]"The essence of history lies not in its consisting of individual facts ... but in the process or development leading from one to another", IH, 169.
[41]Collingwood's 'Scheme for The Principles of History', in Dussen, *History as a Science*, App. I, emphasis in original.
[42]TM, 267, my emphasis.

the object of objective knowledge, invites the fundamental suspension of his claim to truth."[43] If we follow Ricoeur, we should say that while Gadamer and Collingwood agree that self-knowledge occasions a unity between consciousness and object, Gadamer, unlike Collingwood, preserves the otherness of the past in his thesis of the 'fusion of horizons'. Yet Collingwood is closer to Gadamer than Ricoeur supposes. Collingwood was aware that the problem of distinguishing past from present without divorcing them was of supreme importance. In the *Autobiography* he states: "No question in my study of historical method ever gave me so much trouble; and the answer was not complete until some years later [i.e. after 1928]."[44] He goes on to give the principle of incapsulation as the solution. There is a fusion between the past and present, but the principle that past life "is prevented from overflowing into" present life because it is incapsulated in this present life, means that past and present while fused are not confused.[45] The result of this fusion is history as the self-knowledge of mind (application) which he then goes on to outline.[46] Furthermore, in the preceding section of this first part it was made clear that the whole direction of Collingwood's thought was focused on overcoming the problem of a divorce between past and present. The doctrine of the self-knowledge of mind was adopted by Collingwood to show that the historian can have knowledge of the past in the present and know that it is knowledge of the past.[47] It follows that two things need to be demonstrated. First, Collingwood's idea that the past lives on in the present must mean more than that the remains of the past can be observed in the present. Secondly, more evidence needs to be gathered showing that Collingwood thought that understanding consisted of a 'fusion of horizons'.

If one followed a constructionist interpretation of Collingwood's philosophy of history, whereby the past is nothing more than an intellectual construction in the present, the conclusion that history was the explanation of present evidence would be inevitable: "Collingwood differs from most philosophers of history in that he was not concerned with explaining history; he was, however, concerned with explaining evidence."[48] On this interpretation, J. P. Hogan's, the only view open to us would be to align Collingwood's understanding to Dilthey's, and apply Gadamer's criticism of the latter to the former.[49] This is why I believe Hogan's attempt to demonstrate the hermeneutical basis of Collingwood's philosophy is doomed from the start. Beginning from the concept of 'ideality'[50] the historian reconstitutes the past from the observable remains in the

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[43]TM, 270.
[44]A, 112.
[45]A, 113f.
[46]A, 114-19.
[47]See IH, 151-59.
[48]Hogan, *Collingwood*, 116.
[49]TM, 192-234, esp. 230.
[50]See Collingwood's article 'Some Perplexities about Time', and his lectures 'Outlines of a Philosophy of History' (1928) in IH (rev. ed.).

present. Because the remains are 'dead' they cannot speak for themselves, and so are totally dependent upon the historian's act of imagination. On this view, the past is dead and gone and what we call the past is simply a construction in the present. It follows that a constructionist is unable (or better, unwilling) to distinguish the past from his thought about the past. Ricoeur reaches the same conclusion about Collingwood, because for him what survives in the present is nothing but the act of re-enactment. "We might even go so far as to say, paradoxically, that a trace only becomes a trace of the past at the moment when its character of pastness is abolished by the atemporal act of rethinking the event in its internal thought."[51] Collingwood's thesis that the past lives on in the present, however, cannot be reduced to either of these ideas. The tendency to attribute this thesis to a thorough-going idealism does, of course, appear plausible, but it misses an essential aspect of Collingwood's understanding of process: the concept of tradition.

For Collingwood a process is a dialectic in which one phase gives way to another, but with the added notion that the previous stage conserves itself in the latter. This leads to what Collingwood calls an accumulation or enrichment of the process. In an unpublished manuscript he displays the scope of this idea: "For mind in general, this accumulation is called *experience*; for consciousness, it is called *memory*, for a social unity, it is called *tradition*; for knowledge, it is called *history*."[52] In this light, the concept of ideality takes on another dimension. It is, in fact, Collingwood's way of saying that while the past is not an actuality, it remains in the present. Things, in other words, come into existence and go out of existence, but they do not cease to be. That Collingwood is thinking of tradition when he uses the concept of ideality is made clear in the following:

> the historical past is that which not only was, but remains historically knowable, which it does only because it remains: remains not in its actuality (as form embodied in matter) but in its ideality (as pure form) ... We can know the Norman Conquest because, being its heirs, we have it in our own minds (in our actual political consciousness) as an integral element. Its eternity is therefore nothing but a grandiloquent (and inaccurate) way of stating its survival as an effective force down to the present. On this showing the eternity of historical fact is only the continuity of historical tradition: the continued embodiment of the past in the present.[53]

The emphasis on tradition annuls the idea that the 'remains' of the past in the present are purely empirical remains. A 'trace' "must be something more than any material body, or any state of a material body."[54] Whether, in other words, material sources do survive in the present, Collingwood realizes that by themselves they are not enough. "In general terms, the modern historian can study the Middle Ages, in the way in which he actually does study them, only

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[51]Ricoeur, TN 3, 146.
[52]'Notes Toward a Metaphysic', Bodleian, dep. 18/4, 15, my emphases.
[53]'Notes on the History', Bodleian, dep. 13/2.
[54]A, 96.

because they are not dead. By that I mean not that their writings and so forth are still in existence as material objects, but that their ways of thinking are still in existence as ways in which people still think."[55] Two things follow from this: first, since the historian is part of this process, historical consciousness cannot create this process. Behind the constructionist argument (and Ricoeur's criticism) is the idea that the subject is master of history. Nothing escapes the subject: rather, everything is constituted through its creative action. Collingwood, however, does not believe this. Echoing what I put forward in Chapter 1 he asserts: "Tradition here does not mean conscious knowledge of the past."[56] On the contrary, tradition, in Collingwood's view, is 'objective' because it *remains*.[57] He represents historical consciousness as a 'subjective' act of interpretation *on* the past, while tradition is the 'objective' act *of* the past itself. We are, therefore, able to say that without historical consciousness we have no medium which can give us a view of the historical past. But conversely: without a tradition of unconscious thought there can be no historical consciousness. In the second place, the recognition that the *esse* of the past is not to be equated with what is historically known reveals Collingwood's insight into Gadamer's principle of 'effective-history'. Let me now repeat the important citation from Chapter 1 as evidence for this: "The continuity of a cultural tradition is unconscious: those who live in it need not be explicitly aware of its existence. The continuity of a tradition is a continuity of a *force* by which past experience *affects the future*; and this force does not depend on the conscious memory of those experiences."[58]

Gadamer's statement, cited earlier, that the 'power of effective-history does not depend on its being recognized' leads to an important critique of subjectivism. Developing Heidegger's principle of 'thrownness' (and *Dasein*) in terms of tradition, Gadamer realizes that the important thing is not a person's judgements but their prejudices. As agents, in other words, we are situated in a tradition that determines the questions we ask. It has been a common assumption that Collingwood was too subjectivist to come to such a conclusion. As with much Collingwood has written there is some truth in this. The polemic in *The Idea of History* against scissors-and-paste history that ends with Collingwood's important idea that the historian is his own authority, obscures the consequences of effective-history. While the logic of question and answer contains the idea that a real question is one that must 'arise', and that this question can only be asked if it is based on prior knowledge, as we saw in the previous chapter, he applied his logic to specific problems of historical reconstruction. This limited its scope to the historian who asks the questions, obscuring the role tradition has in determining the questions asked. Yet together with

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[55]A, 97.
[56]'Notes on the History', dep. 13/2.
[57]'Notes on the History', dep. 13/2, my emphasis.
[58]*Roman Britain and the English Settlements*, 252, my emphases.

the evidence of Chapter 1 and that given immediately above. Collingwood's appeal to the idea that motion is not relative to an observer but relative to a reference point which includes the observer, provides strong evidence against the accusation of subjectivism. The fundamental point here is that Collingwood saw that humanity makes history in circumstances it has not made. Furthermore, it is feasible that Collingwood held the idea that when understanding takes place it will always be a different understanding. Because the continuity of tradition is unconscious, any modification in fundamental ideas, which corresponds to asking new questions, will not be consciously devised "but created by a process of unconscious thought".[59]

In the final analysis, Collingwood's doctrine of the self-knowledge of mind does not acquiesce in the idea that consciousness and object are identical. On the one hand, the principle of incapsulation is the theory that secures this, while on the other, the continuity of an unconscious tradition ensures that the questioner only makes conscious what was already given. I have demonstrated that the principle of incapsulation bears a similarity to Gadamer's principle of the 'fusion of horizons'. What I now want to do is indicate two other places where Collingwood displays this idea. It will be obvious from what I have just said that Collingwood's explicit statement of this idea is rather sparse. However, explicit statements, whether few or many, must be seen in the context of their interpretation. It is the doctrine of the self-knowledge of mind that, I believe, is able to provide this interpretative framework.

In the lecture on re-enactment in *The Idea of History* Collingwood demonstrates that thought, where it studies the act of thinking itself, is "able to study past acts of thinking and compare them with the present act."[60] Now in the case of thinking about a feeling there is a difference. "The actual past anger of which I am thinking is past and gone; that does not reappear ... The gap of time between my present thought and its past object is bridged not by the survival or revival of the object, *but only by the power of thought to overleap such a gap*."[61] This makes more sense of Collingwood's criticism of Dilthey that Gadamer believes to be very disappointing. Collingwood criticizes Dilthey for converting history into psychology.[62] Now psychology, in Collingwood's view, is the science of feeling.[63] It is evident, therefore, that Collingwood criticizes Dilthey for conceiving historical understanding as an achievement of contemporaneity with the past; i.e. for thinking that the historian must overcome temporal distance. Collingwood calls this 'overleaping' a function of memory, which can be equated with (historical) consciousness as he does when talking about enrichment. This consciousness is, in other words, a consciousness of temporal distance and as such forms perhaps only one half of understanding. If, on the contrary,

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[59]*Essay on Metaphysics*, 48, n.
[60]IH, 293.
[61]IH, 293, my emphasis.
[62]IH, 173.
[63]EM, 106-11.

what is thought about is a past activity of thought, "the gap is bridged from both sides".[64] Collingwood comments:

> historical knowledge is that special kind of memory where the object of present thought is past thought. the gap between present and past being bridged not only by the power of present thought to think of the past, but also by the power of past thought to reawaken itself in the present.[65]

It is evident from this that Collingwood does recognize that understanding is, in Gadamer's words, a 'fusion of horizons'. Furthermore, in the same section of the lecture Collingwood appears to give some indication that by 'bridging the gap from both sides' he realizes that understanding changes. He comments that whereas in memory (one horizon) the past is a mere spectacle, in history (two horizons) the past is re-enacted in present thought. "So far as this thought is mere thought, the past is merely re-enacted."[66] The use of 're-enacted' here appears to be a synonym for 'repeated'. But he goes on to say that "so far as it is *thought about thought*, the past is thought of as being re-enacted, and my knowledge of myself is historical knowledge."[67] In the *Autobiography* he provides a clue to this emphasis on development when he states that knowledge from a dead past is useless to present action; "because, since history never exactly repeats itself, the problem before me now is never sufficiently like the problem described by my authorities to justify me in repeating the solution which then succeeded, or avoiding that which then failed."[68] Here again, it is not the past in itself that is important, but the interaction of past and present which produces *appropriate* action.

The second example of Collingwood's sensitivity to the idea of a fusion of two horizons is found in his moral philosophy lectures from 1940. In the context of a discussion of duty, Collingwood states: "His [the historian's] consciousness is a consciousness not only of his subject in the past, but of his situation and activity in the present."[69] The emphasis on duty is important, because it shows that, like Gadamer, Collingwood recognizes that the historian's understanding of the past is itself an event.[70] That is to say, because consciousness of duty is consciousness "that this and nothing else is what we can do"[71], the historian's understanding is a development of past understanding. This is put clearly in the following: "... every historian is conscious not only of [the past]; he is also conscious that his own interpretation or reconstruction or view ... is itself an

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[64]IH, 293.
[65]IH, 294.
[66]IH, 293.
[67]IH, 293, my emphasis.
[68]A, 99f.
[69]'Goodness', Bodleian, dep. 8, 74.
[70]"Understanding itself proved to be an event ..." TM, 276.
[71]'Goodness,' Bodleian, dep. 8, 77.

historical event. It is a unique view: a view which could only be taken now..."[72] It has become obvious that these explicit statements of what Gadamer calls a 'fusion of horizons' do not exist apart from the doctrine of the self-knowledge.

It is this doctrine that enable him to show that re-enactment is the telos of understanding. "So long", he says, "as the past and present are outside one another, knowledge of the past is not of much use in the problems of the present."[73] It is the tendency to objectify the past and the present that prevents understanding. Like Gadamer, he recognizes that a rejection of the historical 'object' allows past and present to form a unity in which the interpreter understands both. "The past and present are not two objects: the past is an element in the present, and in studying the past we are actually coming to know the present, not coming to know something else which will lead us on to know or to manipulate the present."[74] This is a clear echo of Gadamer's principle of the 'fusion of horizons'. Understanding, in other words, does not terminate with knowledge of the past in itself; rather, from this perspective, knowledge of the past is but one phase in the act of understanding. Collingwood sees, therefore, that understanding is only complete in its *application* to present action: "we study history in order to see more clearly into the situation in which we are called upon to act. Hence the plane on which, ultimately, all problems arise is the plane of 'real' life: that to which they are referred for their solution is history."[75] As with Gadamer, Collingwood recognizes that true understanding must involve development. This is a consequence of their projective understanding of being.

The focus on the concept of process that I have sought to pursue is important, because it highlights the radical nature of Collingwood's understanding of being. It gives his thought its cutting edge and perhaps is what MacKinnon attempts to grasp when he says that Collingwood more than most philosophers belongs to the twentieth century.[76] The *rapprochement* between nature and history that Collingwood pursued, distinguishes him from the German school of *Verstehen*. Historical being, in Collingwood's view, does not have to be distinguished from natural being in order to give an epistemological justification to the methodology of history. Rather, both modern physics and modern history are characterized by a projective understanding of being. If the concept of process is taken seriously, in other words, re-enactment is no more a mere logical concept than it is a methodological concept. It must possess those characteristics of development that are proper to understanding.

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[72]'Goodness,' Bodleian, dep. 8, 74.
[73]A, 100.
[74]'Lectures on the Philosophy of History' 1926, 406.
[75]A, 114.
[76]"... he belonged more intimately than most philosophers to the twentieth century, and the problems in respect of which he urged Socratic self-scrutiny were those he believed lay at the heart of the spiritual experience of his contemporaries. "MacKinnon, 'R. G. Collingwood', 174.

(II)

A Re-description of Relativity

§ 1. Dialectical Development and the Problem of Progress

by progress I mean a change always leading to something new, with no necessary implication of betterment.[77]

From Chapter 1 we have learned that the essay on *Method* grew out of Collingwood's lectures on moral philosophy. This is why the Socratic dictum - "in philosophical inquiry what we are trying to do is not to discover something of which until now we have been ignorant, but to know better something which in some sense we knew already"[78] - is central to the whole book. It follows that, since the process is both a unity and contains all which is necessary for understanding, this understanding will be characterized as a movement from the implicit to the explicit. When we come to know something which in some sense we knew already, in other words, we do not come "to know it better in the sense of coming to know more about it, but [come] to know it better in the sense of coming to know it in a different and better way - actually instead of potentially, or explicitly instead of implicitly."[79]

To a certain extent, the idea of development is secure. It is not quite correct, therefore, to see in this development simply an echo of Schleiermacher's doctrine that 'we understand an author better than he understood himself'. In Schleiermacher's vision this only makes conscious what is already contained (but unconscious) in a work *as it always is*. "He sees", according to Gadamer, "the act of understanding as the reconstructive completion of the production."[80] Collingwood implicitly rejects this when he says that we do not come to know 'more about it, but come to know it in a different and better way'. By rejecting the tendency towards objectification Collingwood allows difference to inhabit the process. Yet he does not escape the problem completely, because as I have shown in Chapter 1, he qualifies this 'difference' with an emphasis on dialectical progress. In qualifying this development with the idea that we come to know what we knew already in a *better* way, he betrays the emphasis on superior understanding.

In this respect, the absence of a scale of forms analysis in Collingwood's historical work is significant. As I sought to emphasize, the recognition of pluralism provides a valid point of distinction between dialectical progress and historical progress. In what follows I shall attempt to demonstrate this.

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[77]IN, 14.
[78]*Essay on Philosophical Method*, 11.
[79]EPM, 11.
[80]TM, 169.

In the section of *The Idea of History* entitled 'Progress as Created by Historical Thinking' Collingwood rejects both the idea of a single historical progress leading to the present and Spengler's doctrine of historical cycles.[81] Rather, progress in historical understanding is relative to a comparison between two historical systems of thought that are not merely successive but continuous. (This argument is of course identical to that put forward in the manuscript 'The Function of Metaphysics in Civilisation' canvassed in Chapter 1.) Furthermore, in order to judge whether progress has taken place the historian must have equal insight into both. Such conditions, however, show Collingwood's agnosticism with regard to dialectical progress when applied to history. In the first place one cannot on this view have equal insight into historical periods taken as a whole: "For the historian can never take any period as a whole."[82] Secondly, one cannot judge progress by asking which period comes nearer to the way of life or solution that is acceptable to oneself. "By re-enacting the experience of either in his [the historian's] own mind he has already accepted it as a thing to be judged by its own standards: a form of life having its own problems, to be judged by its success in solving those problems and no others."[83] There is, in other words, no one standard available by which to judge the progress of either. But this does not lead to complete incomensurability; both systems of thought are related in a continuous development. Thus Newtonian physics is a coherent account of reality in so far as it solves its own problems. However, in the present, certain aspects of Newtonian physics appear to lose their grasp upon reality and stand in need of revision. Einstein makes an advance on Newton by solving these problems. This is a "partly constructive and positive and partly critical and negative"[84] development. Yet this criticism of Newton is unrelated to the solution of his own problems; rather, it is related to the subsequent problems that have arisen out of the relation between Newtonian physics and reality.[85]

The emphasis on the 'subsequent problems' that have arisen is what Collingwood had in mind when he used the phrase 'unconscious thought'. Now he did not believe that history advanced by a 'cunning of reason' understood in terms of something outside humanity. Hegel, he says, sometimes "seems to personify reason into something outside human life, which brings about through the agency of blind and passionate men purposes which are its purposes and not theirs."[86] Rather, 'unconscious thought' is best understood as 'effective-history'; as that which

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[81]IH, 328. For his specific views on Spengler see, 'Oswald Spengler', 'The Theory of Historical Cycles' and IH, 181-83.
[82]IH, 327.
[83]IH, 329.
[84]IH, 334.
[85]Collingwood gives the following example from Greek philosophy. "Aristotle's philosophy would mark a progress on Plato's, granted that by that new step Aristotle sacrificed nothing that Plato had achieved..." IH, 333.
[86]IH, 116f.

takes place outside our conscious horizon. The purpose of historical thought is to make what is unconscious (implicit) conscious (explicit). In the first place this is done by studying the past. "Newton lives in Einstein in the way in which any past experience lives in the mind of the historian, as a past experience known as past."[87] Because Newton's theory is known as past this creates the tension between past and present and occasions the need for new understanding. That is to say, the tension between past and present testifies to the operation of effective-history. In relation to this, the section in *The Idea of History* on Hegel and Marx in which Collingwood describes the nature of an Hegelian Idea is important. Such an Idea is

> a thought, a conception of man's life held by man himself and thus akin to a Kantian category, but a category historically conditioned: a way in which people come to think at a certain time, and in accordance with which they organise their whole life, *only to find that the idea changes by a dialectic of its own into a different idea* and that the manner of life which expressed it will no longer hold together, but breaks up and transforms itself into the expression of a second idea which replaces the first.[88]

This passage comes from *The Principles of History* written by Collingwood in 1939. It is plausible that, due to its temporal proximity to the *Metaphysics* and the resonance with absolute presuppositions, the emphasis on dialectic throws added light on the notion of unconscious thought. Thus, the attempt at a new understanding includes the operation of this unconscious thought or dialectic. In other words, Einstein's new theory, while it includes Newton's as part of its own, also solves contemporary problems brought about by the operation of history. That is to say, this fusion of horizons between past physics and present physics is what Einstein brings about, but this does not exclude the operation of unconscious thought. It follows from this that the theory of Einstein is an advance on Newton's in so far as it is more *appropriate* to the *present* situation. The operation of unconscious thought annuls the emphasis on superior understanding, because in the case of Einstein, his theory, while formed under the influence and going beyond Newton's, is only appropriate to the facts of the present situation. In this sense, like all historical understanding, it is unique (an event). If this were not the case, and Newton and Einstein ask themselves the same question, then we should say that Einstein was more a genius than Newton. But this ignores the operation of history; Newton, in other words, was not a half-developed Einstein.

Collingwood's move towards a more pluralistic understanding of progress, in this instance, has less to do with complete relativism, and more to do with a rejection of the notion of superior understanding. In the *Autobiography* he gives the example of political theory. "Take Plato's *Republic* and Hobbes's *Leviathan*, so far as they are concerned with politics. Obviously the political theories they set forth are not the same. But do they represent two different theories

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[87]IH, 334.
[88]IH, 122.

of the same thing? ... No; because Plato's 'State' is the Greek πόλις, and Hobbes's is the absolutist State of the seventeenth century... What even the best and wisest of those who are engaged in politics are trying to do has altered. Plato's *Republic* is an attempt at a theory of one thing; Hobbes's *Leviathan* an attempt at a theory of something else."[89] Though his point is overdone, this is not thorough-going relativism. There is a connection between the two things, but it is not the kind of connection the 'realists' expected it to be. "Anybody would admit that Plato's *Republic* and Hobbes's *Leviathan* are about two things which are in one way the same thing and in another way different. That is not in dispute. What is in dispute is the kind of sameness and the kind of difference. The 'realists' thought that the sameness was the sameness of a 'universal', and the difference the difference between two instances of that universal. But this is not so. The sameness is the sameness of an historical process, and the difference is the difference between one thing which in the course of that process has turned into something else, and the other thing into which it has turned."[90] In the light of such evidence, the progress that Collingwood speaks of is not a superior knowledge of something. It cannot be resolved into a scale of forms analysis. Speaking of the concept of 'plot' in history he writes: "Now such a course of events may be truly called a progress because it is a going forward; it has direction, everything in it proceeds out of what has gone before and could not have happened without the occurrence of its past ... [b]ut though history is in this sense a progress and nothing but a progress, it cannot be so in any other sense. No one of the phases through which it moves is any better, or any worse, than any of the others ..."[91] History is, therefore, characterized as a change without betterment. This can be called a progress only in so far as it is more appropriate to the present situation. I hope to bring out the fruit of this idea in what follows.

§ 2. The Logic of Question and Answer: The Rejection of Permanent Problems

To [Collingwood] the realists were men who were running away from the critical problem; they sought some point at which men could give an unconditional validity to their commerce with the real.[92]

In Part I we saw that both Bradley and the 'realists' shared the doctrine that mind is immediate experience. This meant that both understood 'thought' to be separate from experience. In other words, Bradley and the 'realists' believed that immediacy (feeling or emotion) was divorced from mediacy (thought or knowledge). Collingwood rejects this divorce and shows that it appears plausible only because the Idealist coherence theory of truth and the Realist correspondence-theory assume the 'propositional principle'. In *The Principles of Art* this is given as the

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[89]A, 61f.
[90]A, 62.
[91]Collingwood, 'The Theory of Historical Cycles', 86f.
[92]MacKinnon, 'R. G. Collingwood', 171.

"assumption that, among the various 'sentences' ... there are some which, instead of expressing emotions, make statements."[93] Such a principle is able to separate experience from the unity of 'pure thought' whose truth can then be held up for testing.[94]

The idea that truth is a quality pertaining to propositions of 'pure thought' that are isolated from experience makes sense of the idea of permanent problems. The history of philosophy is seen as an account of different answers to the same set of questions. In other words, those philosophers that are recorded in our history, are those who have had the intelligence to surmount their historical situation and ask eternal questions.[95] These philosophers go wrong only in so far as, now here now there, they were unable to lift themselves clean out of their context. In other words, the *best* work of these philosophers remains valuable to the present *in spite of* its historical character.

Collingwood responded to such an account with his well-known logic of question and answer. Yet it is important to show the relation between this logic and the criticism of the 'propositional principle', because many interpreters of re-enactment attribute the essence of the 'propositional principle' to the exercise of re-thinking. The argument goes that Collingwood treats thought as if it were 'pure thought' devoid of any context or experiential element. This leads to the idea that re-enactment is an atemporal rather than transhistorical condition of historical knowledge. On the contrary, Collingwood championed the idea that intellect or pure thought could not be divorced from emotion or experience. In *The Principles of Art* he states: "Language in its original imaginative form may be said to have expressiveness ... Language in its intellectualized form has both expressiveness and meaning. As language, it expresses a certain emotion. As symbolism, it refers beyond that emotion to the thought whose emotional charge it is."[96] In all language, then, including propositions, there is both logic (symbolism) and emotion (expression). Therefore, "the progressive intellectualization of language" ... into scientific symbolism ... "represents not a progressive drying-up of emotion, but its progressive articulation and specialization. We are not getting away from an emotional atmosphere into a dry, rational atmosphere; we are acquiring new emotions and new ways of expressing them."[97] It follows that all propositions are expressed in language and therefore all propositions are expressions of experience. The main target of this argument is I. A. Richards distinction between 'scientific' language and 'emotive' language. Richards assumes there are two uses of language: "a statement may be used for the sake of the *reference*, true or false, which it causes. This is the *scientific* use

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[93]*The Principles of Art*, 260.
[94]PA, 261.
[95]"That is a question which all philosophers ask themselves sooner or later; the right answer to it, as given by Plato or Kant or Wittgenstein, is...." A, 71.
[96]PA, 269.
[97]PA, 269.

of language. But it may also be used for the sake of the effects in emotion and attitude produced by the reference it occasions. This is the *emotive* use of language."[98] By contrast, as I have shown, according to Collingwood, language is not a tool used in different ways while remaining the same tool, but an *activity*. Language is, in other words, not a technical device which exists apart from its use, but an artistic activity which, as it progresses, becomes more specialized while remaining artistic. While the division between the 'scientific use of language' and the 'emotive use of language' recommended by Richards reinforces the division between 'pure thought' and 'experience', Collingwood resolves the duality of experience and thought into 'language'. This means that because language is the root of experience and concept formation one cannot divorce them when an attempt is made to determine the truth of a proposition. A. MacIntyre, who, more than most appreciates and exemplifies Collingwood's own approach to the history of philosophy, nevertheless criticizes Collingwood on exactly this point. "It is always possible and usually useful", MacIntyre writes, "to abstract both problem and solution, question and answer, from their particular context and examine matters of logic without too much reference to their *actual* history."[99] And yet the whole point of the *logic* of question and answer is to deny the possibility of such a divorce. It must be kept in mind, however, that Collingwood was, at this point, involved in a polemic against the 'realists'. To the extent, therefore, that the logic of question and answer was a manifesto-like programme, Collingwood would always be prone to exaggerating tendencies. Such criticism nevertheless need not affect the main point: the appeal to a contradiction between two propositions is frequently a consequence of a failure to appreciate "two successive analyzes of a concept in process of transformation, between which there is no question of a choice."[100]

It is on this point that Collingwood criticizes Hegel. In a manuscript entitled 'Notes on Hegel's Logic', he points out that in the *Encyclopaedia* Hegel mistakenly separates *Vorstellung*

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[98]Richards, *The Principles*, cited in PA, 262, emphases in original. It is evident that Richards was influenced by Moore's idea of mind as immediate experience. This idea placed objectivity wholly within the self-existence of an 'object'. In other words, Moore's attempt to identify 'emotivism' with moral decision shows that he thought moral action was simply a form of subjectivism. In a critical note on the theory of correspondence Collingwood states: "truth = correspondence between what we think with that about which we think, and error would be the absence of such correspondence. But this theory has implications which when closely examined, are rather alarming. Implies subjective world is a world of caprice and disorder - things done without reason." 'Central Problems in Metaphysics (April 1935)', Bodleian, dep. 20/1. It is this disquiet, expressed in the 'Realist' detachment of theory from practice and of 'pure thought' from 'emotion' or 'sense', which allowed Collingwood, in a logically correct (yet perhaps unfair) move, to identify the Realists as "the propagandists of a coming Fascism" (A, 167). He was, in other words, demonstrating that the 'English Channel' was no defence against a *logical correlation* between emotivism and fascism.

[99]MacIntyre, *A Short History*, 93, his emphasis.

[100]*A Short History*, 93.

and *denken*.[101] "Hegel thinks, like Plato, that we philosophise by getting rid of our senses instead of deepening them."[102] That is to say, like the 'realists', Hegel separates experience from thought. Collingwood puts this in logical terms when he says: "Hegel has no idea of an *a priori* synthesis of the symbol and meaning."[103] This has important consequences for Collingwood's understanding of contradiction. With Hegel he believed in the importance of contradiction, but the principle of correlation (between question and answer) enabled him to show that contradiction was a relative term. He denied "that two propositions might, simply as propositions, contradict one another, and that by examining them simply as propositions you could find out whether they did so or not."[104] Rather, no two propositions can contradict one another unless they are answers to the same question. It follows that in order to judge whether two theories contradict one another we should discover the meaning of the concepts involved. We cannot, then, say that two theories or propositions contradict each other *absolutely*. Whether Collingwood is right to criticize Hegel in this way is open to question; nevertheless, the critique has its basis in Hegel's idea that the development of rationality was characterized by the progressive drying-up of experience. We might say, with Cavell, that in Hegel's system reason prevents the deification of everything but itself.[105] Such an idea gives Hegel's system the illusion of absolute knowledge. Collingwood, however, called this a lie and always insisted that philosophy was only an interim report on how far consciousness had reached.[106]

With his logic of question and answer Collingwood is able to show that there are no permanent problems because there is no such thing as unconditional knowledge. Analysing Cook-Wilson's doctrine that 'knowing makes no difference to what is known' he shows that it amounts to believing that if one can know that no difference is made to a thing θ with the condition *c*, and also what θ is like without condition *c*, it follows that one can compare them - which would mean that θ can be known unconditionally.[107] Rather, for Collingwood, each text or system of thought gains its character by subsumption within its historical situation. The strict correlation between question and answer means that a question is not a preliminary to the act of knowing but one half

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[101]Collingwood remarks: "philosophy [for Hegel] contains no *Vorstellung* element ... this is pure Platonism - dualism between thought and sense and superior dignity and difficulty of thought." 'Notes on Hegel's Logic', Bodleian, dep. 16/2, 2.

[102]'Notes on Hegel's Logic', 2. I am indebted to R. Peters, 'Collingwood on Hegel's Dialectic', for drawing my attention to this criticism of Hegel. In paragraph three of the *Enzyklopädie* Hegel comments: "Die Schwierigkeit liegt einesteils in einer Unfähigkeit, die an sich nur *Ungewohntheit* ist, abstrakt zu denken, d. h. reine Gedanken festzuhalten und in ihnen sich zu bewegen ... Ein anderes aber ist, die Gedanken selbst unvermischt zum Gegenstande zu machen." Although he says it is difficult to think abstractly, it is clear that this is the aim of his logic. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 3.

[103]'Notes on Hegel's Logic', 2.

[104]A, 33.

[105]Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?* 325.

[106]IN, 174.

[107]A, 44; Kerr, 'Idealism and Realism', 18f.

of a single process which ends in an answer. In other words, the truth of something cannot be ascertained without taking into account that the questioner is part of the process he is studying, and has his own place in that process. It follows that in order to understand a philosophical or literary text the question it purports to answer needs to be discovered.

The emphasis on correlation is important, because it is related to the idea of 'appropriate' understanding or action. This is made clear if we move beyond the application of correlation to a single text. If we now think of the logic of question and answer as the structure of the historical process, we can relate the notion of correlation to action or present understanding. That is to say, the correlation between question and answer makes explicit a third element that Gadamer calls 'fusion'. In this sense, the question (the past horizon) and the answer (the present horizon) give way to application. This application will always be different, because the historical process that it belongs to alters the situation. But to call this relativism does not touch the essence of what Collingwood meant to show by this correlation. This is only a negative judgement that arises out of the idea of superior knowledge. As I have already demonstrated in Chapter 1, Knox's citation of the passage about 'point of view' in history as evidence that Collingwood succumbed to a thorough-going relativism says more about Knox than Collingwood. Seen in the light of his attempted *rapprochement* between historical consciousness and duty, such statements reveal the necessity of relativity if each age is to meet its contemporary needs.

Collingwood never acquiesced in a thorough-going relativism. He makes this clear when, in a passage from 1936 - the same year as the passage about 'point of view' - he writes: if the past were a natural process "[i]t would follow that the ways of thinking characteristic of any given historical period are ways in which people must think then, but in which others, cast at different times in a different mental mould, cannot think at all. If that were the case, there would be no such thing as truth."[108] The past is not a natural process, in which the past dies in being replaced by the present, but an historical process, in which the past lives on in the present. As a consequence, the contextual limitations of a thinker are not defects. "So far from being a defect, they are a sign of merit; they are most clearly to be seen in those works whose quality is of the best."[109] In this light, relativity becomes a positive concept in so far as the past remains important to the present, because the past answered its own questions.

> If these systems remain valuable to posterity, that is not in spite of their strictly historical character but because of it. To us, the ideas expressed in them are ideas belonging to the past; but it is not a dead past; by understanding it historically we incorporate it into our present thought, and enable ourselves by developing and criticizing it to use that heritage for our own advancement.[110]

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[108]IH, 225.
[109]IH, 229.
[110]IH, 230.

The divorce between experience and 'pure thought' that the 'realists' pursued missed this completely; for, in the end, they believed that thinking about a subject made no difference to it.

§ 3. The Development of Past Thought in Re-Thinking

I have already shown that re-thinking is not a thesis about numerical identity. On the contrary, re-thinking is conceptual. As a consequence, Ricoeur's idea that re-enactment is a thesis about numerical identity is simply wrong. However, in what follows, I want to demonstrate this by reiterating the 'conceptual' nature of re-thinking. Secondly, I shall argue that re-enactment is not a thesis about recovering the 'original intentions' of historical agents.

In order to show that development is a necessary characteristic of re-enactment the problem I left partly unresolved at the end of Chapter 3 needs to be addressed. This problem was as follows: the discovery that re-enactment was a transcendental condition of history rather than a method appeared to strengthen the thesis that re-enactment is governed by the principle of numerical identity. While it makes room for historical inference, this interpretation shifts attention away from temporal distance towards a simple logical rendering of what it means to re-think a thought. For example, historical reconstruction in R. Martin's view simply allows the historian to argue *towards* an identity with the past.[111] It is this understanding of identity that has influenced Ricoeur's interpretation of re-enactment.[112] That is to say, what is re-thought by the historian is *numerically* identical with past thought. As Ricoeur puts it: "from the notion of an inside of an event, conceived as its 'thought', we can *pass directly* to the notion of reenactment as the act of rethinking what was once thought for the first time."[113] This idea of 'pass directly' echoes Gardiner's argument that thoughts are 'timeless entities'. In fact Ricoeur thinks re-enactment is atemporal in the sense that it grasps a thought that does not change.[114] The only difference is that, for Ricoeur, this is achieved through inference rather than intuition.[115] This interpretation would hold only if Collingwood believed that re-enactment were either a species of 'acquaintance' or a variant on the doctrine of 'internal relations'. But Collingwood rejects both these interpretations. On the contrary, he is making a conceptual point.

> even thought itself, in its immediacy as the unique act of thought with its unique context in the life of an individual thinker, is not the object of historical knowledge. It cannot be re-enacted; if it could, time itself would be cancelled and the historian would be the person about whom he thinks, living over again in all respects the same. The historian cannot apprehend the individual act of thought in its

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[111]Martin, *Historical Explanation*, 61.

[112]"In this respect, Rex Martin's proposal, in *Historical Explanation* ... to bring about a rapprochement between reenactment and practical inference constitutes the most fruitful attempt I know to link Collingwood to the philosophy of history of Danto, Walsh, and above all von Wright." Ricoeur, TN 3, 307 n. 14.

[113]TN 3, 145, my emphasis.

[114]TN 3, 147.

[115]"Imagination, practical inference, and reenactment have to be thought together." TN 3, 307 n. 14.

individuality, just as it actually happened. What he apprehends of that individual is only something that it might have shared with other acts of thought ...[116]

Furthermore, Ricoeur interprets Collingwood's idea of the 'survival' and 'revival' of thought in a highly idealist manner. He states: "But what does 'survive' mean here? Nothing apart from the act of reenactment. The only meaningful thing, in the final analysis, is the current possession of past activity."[117] In contrast, we have seen already that Collingwood understood the idea of the past living on in the present as equivalent to the continuity of tradition. I find it incredible that Ricoeur believes that Collingwood thinks survival and heritage to be "natural processes".[118] 'Survival' pertains to the tradition of unconscious thought and 'revival' to the means of making this unconscious thought conscious. Heritage in the last resort refers to everything that could not be achieved by one's own action. This implies that there is development in what is re-thought. It is evident that only a conceptual understanding of re-thinking can take account of the idea that what is re-thought is in one sense the same, but in another sense different. In the manuscript 'Notes Toward a Metaphysic' Collingwood illustrates his sensitivity to this:

to call the French Revolution an objective historical fact does not imply that it really existed quite apart from the experience of the people who took part in it; nor does it imply that in that experience the revolution appeared exactly as it appears to me in my historical study of it; what is implied is that the French Revolution is an object of thought, or concept, which appears in different ways to the different persons into whose experience it enters. Everyone whether contemporary observer or historical student, who has genuine knowledge of the French Revolution knows what it really and essentially was, that is, conceives its essence, and this essence is a concept which is public and objective, accessible to any thinking mind into whose experience it enters.[119]

In the light of such evidence, statements that appear to suggest that re-thinking is about a numerical, and therefore, time annulling identity receive their proper context. This is the case with the statement cited in Chapter 3 that "what we think is not altered by alterations of the context in which we think it".[120] I take this to be a conceptual statement which can be applied to the example of the French Revolution cited above. I suspect the problem interpreters have with the concept of re-thinking results from a tendency to take it too literally. In an important unpublished manuscript Collingwood gives an account of re-thinking which shows that, for all its complexity, re-thinking what was once thought *always* goes beyond past thought. He comments: "there are not *two* but *four* senses of thought: a) the act (νοησις) b) the object (νοημα) c) a peculiar kind of act whose object is an act (νοησεως νοησις) d) a peculiar kind of object which

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[116]IH, 303.
[117]TN 3, 146.
[118]TN 3, 146.
[119]'Notes Toward a Metaphysic', E, 34.
[120]IH, 300.

is itself an act (νοησις νουμενη)."[121] Now, in Collingwood's view, history is about 'c', an act of thinking about an act of thinking. However, this is not wholly the case because, as we can see from the example of the French Revolution, history does not rule out 'd'. Not only is the act of thinking peculiar, but also the object, because this is an act of thinking as well. Collingwood then goes on: "it is the peculiar character of this act that it does not *contemplate* its object. It is not θεωρια. It alters the situation which it apprehends ... for the act in this special case absorbs the object into itself, makes it a factor in itself. But conversely *any* νοησεως νοησις goes beyond its object. The mere re-thinking of a νοησις is the transcending of that νοησις and the reduction of it to the status of a factor."[122] This last point about becoming a factor is what Collingwood means to point to with his principle of incapsulation. That is to say, re-thinking always refers to present thoughts and it is this aspect which shows that re-thinking always goes beyond past thought. Collingwood gives the example of William the Conqueror and Harold. "The thought of Harold, his view of the situation, is for Harold not a *factor* in the situation but the *whole* situation. When William knows what Harold is thinking, that thought ... is for William a *factor* and no more. It is an *object* to him: one of the objects about which he thinks: at the same time it is a *factorial way in which he thinks*, for he 'enters into' Harold's thought, thinks as Harold thinks, but thinks other things as well."[123] It follows that the historian must re-think the thoughts that the historical agent thinks. But, to make it more complicated, while the historian re-thinks the whole situation of William, it remains only a factor in his total thought. The telos is reached in so far as the historian goes beyond William's situation by bringing it into a fusion, but not confusion, with his present thought.

It is clear from this manuscript that re-thinking must go beyond the equation of history with original intention. By this I mean that history is not equivalent to the intentions of historical agents. Taking into account the previous chapter, it is evident that Collingwood's rejection of testimony drives the inquiry beyond the statement at hand. He rejected the idea that history corresponds to the testimony of agents or witnesses. Rather, the question asked is: "What does this statement mean? And this is *not* equivalent to the question 'What did the person who made it mean by it?', although that is doubtless a question that the historian must ask, and must be able to answer. It is equivalent, rather, to the question 'What light is thrown on the subject in which I am interested by the fact that this person made this statement, meaning by it what he did mean?'"[124] Gadamer's quarrel with Collingwood centres on his claim that Collingwood does not distinguish the question of the meaning of an event from the question whether the event went according to the

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[121]'Notes on the History of Historiography' in van der Dussen, HS, 179. Van der Dussen's pagination hereafter.
[122]Notes on the History of Historigraphy, 180, emphases in original.
[123]Notes on the History of Historigraphy, 180, emphases in original.
[124]IH, 275, my emphasis.

plan of the protagonists.[125] He has in mind the discussion of the Battle of Trafalgar in the *Autobiography* where Collingwood states: "Naval historians think it worth while to argue about Nelson's tactical plan at Trafalgar because he won the battle. It is not worth while arguing about Villeneuve's plan. He did not succeed in carrying it out, and therefore no one will ever know what it was."[126] Such a statement appears to suggest that Nelson's plan *is* the meaning of the Battle of Trafalgar. This is presumably reinforced when Collingwood says that history does not mean knowing what events followed what. It means looking at the events from the point of view of the agents involved.[127] But the point of this example is to show that the tactics of Nelson can only be discovered by studying the battle. That is to say, the point here is not simply to discover what Nelson *meant* to do, but to discover what he *actually did*. Thus, original typescripts of the coded orders are of no use, because intentionality in Collingwood's sense presupposes a completed action seen from the perspective of the historian. To accept testimony of Villeneuve's plan would be to admit that it is really the knowledge of the agent's intentions that wholly comprises historical knowledge. As he writes in *The Idea of History*: "the recognition that what happens in history need not happen through anyone's deliberately wishing it to happen is an indispensable precondition of understanding any historical process."[128] Collingwood is adamant that the historian must grasp the thought of the historical agent, but this does not mean the inquiry ends with this. In Nelson's case, his thought was the whole of his situation; but in the case of the historian, re-thinking Nelson's thought is only one factor. The historian, in other words, re-thinks past thought in the *present* and knows this is what he is doing. As a consequence, re-thinking goes beyond a mere reconstruction. Re-enactment, in Collingwood's view, "is not a passive surrender to the spell of another's mind; it is the labour of active and therefore critical thinking. The historian not only re-enacts past thought, *he re-enacts it in the context of his own knowledge* and therefore, in re-enacting it, criticizes it, forms his own judgement of its value, corrects whatever errors he can discern in it. This criticism of the thought whose history he traces is not something secondary to the tracing of it. It is an indispensable condition of historical knowledge itself."[129] Rational explanation, in other words, does not simply refer to the past point of view of the agent; rather, the historian must make the action intelligible in the present.[130] This is because

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[125]TM, 334.
[126]A, 70.
[127]A, 58.
[128]IH, 48.
[129]IH, 215, this mirrors Gadamer's statement: "a reconstructed question can never stand within its original horizon, for the historical horizon that is outlined in the reconstruction is not a truly comprehensive one. It is, rather, included within the horizon that embraces us as the questioners who have responded to the word that has been handed down." TM, 337.
[130]This is akin to A. Danto's emphasis on 'narrative sentences' as retrospective descriptions of the past: "For the whole point of history is *not* to know about actions as witnesses might, but as historians do, in connection with later events and as part of temporal wholes." *Analytical Philosophy*, 183, his emphasis.

rational explanation does not depend on an agent's propositionally rehearsed calculation; rather, the historian *shows* the appropriateness of the agent's 'reasons' for acting. Re-enactment is an achievement of the historian. Paradoxically, perhaps, he is suggesting that historical intention goes beyond what the agent intended.

Yet it is precisely at this point where we discover the limit to the hermeneutical scope of re-enactment. The accent on 'double intentionality' betrays Collingwood's resolve to reduce the field of historicity (i.e. what can be re-enacted) to human action. However, although double intentionality is evidently Hegelian in origin, it is important to see where the difference lies. While the coincidence between history and action together with the dialectical framework of his philosophy make an appeal to double intentionality inevitable, there is no resort on Collingwood's side to a *Weltgeist*. The whole point of Hegel's appeal to a second intention which escapes individual agents, in itself a valid and important feature of history, is to transform unintended consequences into a vehicle for the 'cunning of reason'. From the perspective of the *Weltgeist*, historical agents serve the higher purpose of the development of reason. By taking this second intention up into the *Weltgeist*, Hegel demonstrates his desire to abolish the contingent. Such a move, already dismissed by Collingwood as a theory of implication,[131] becomes an important key to Hegel's thought. On the one side it characterizes what Marx and his disciples found so attractive: we must renounce consolation in order to achieve reconciliation,[132] on the other it repeats itself in Hegel's appeal to the Absolute which abolishes experience in favour of certitude.

In other words, the limit to the hermeneutical scope of re-enactment is found not in an appeal to the Absolute of reflective philosophy, but rather in the restriction of historicity to human action which the thesis of double intentionality proposes to weaken. The accent on a second intention prevents the identification of re-enactment with the original intention of historical agents. Nevertheless, Collingwood's restriction of historicity to human action still confines re-enactment to the problem of understanding others through the expressions that others give of their conscious life. Collingwood, therefore, has one foot firmly planted in the subjective theory of interpretation which characterizes Romantic hermeneutics, while at the same time surpassing Romantic hermeneutics because of his appreciation of tradition.

What is the reason for Collingwood's inability to extricate himself from Romantic hermeneutics? It is obvious from Chapters 4 and 5 that we could explain this by reiterating Collingwood's preoccupation with the dictum that 'all history is the history of thought' and its application to the problems of historical reconstruction. Yet though a necessary element of such an explanation, this in itself is not sufficient to explain Collingwood's restricted vision in this matter. For at stake in the hermeneutics of Gadamer is a concept of understanding which is about

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[131]See Chapter 1, 13.
[132]See Ricoeur, TN 3, 197.

sharing in the communication the text gives us irrespective of authorial intention and past context. The text, in Gadamer's view, is analogous with the poem; it is a self-sufficient world that carries a meaning within itself which always surpasses the conditions of its production. This is something altogether different from the unintended consequences of intentional action; rather, it appeals to a concept of understanding that is irreducible to consciousness. Collingwood never declares this insight with sufficient conviction because, as I emphasized in Chapter 3, his reflections on language were never his main preoccupation. Despite the emphasis on tradition, 'unconscious thought', and the concept of process, Collingwood is inclined to reduce everything belonging to the field of history to an expression of human consciousness. Intentionality rather than language obsesses him. In *The Principles of History*, for example, while evidence is given the form of language, the historian is interested in language only in so far as it reveals the intentions of historical agents.[133] It is true that in the same work Collingwood declares that historians are now beginning to "realize that the history of a thought has nothing to do with the names of the people who think it"[134], but regardless of the precise meaning of this expression the equation of language with consciousness is quite clear: "Language comes into existence with imagination, as a feature of experience at the *conscious* level."[135] At best, therefore, re-enactment displays its kinship with the hermeneutics of Gadamer in so far as it restricts itself to hermeneutical reflection on the historicality inherent in historical research. In fact Collingwood never really argues for any other legitimate application of re-enactment. In itself this is quite enough. However, it cannot be applied as a 'universal philology' in the manner of Gadamer's hermeneutics. The appeal to intentionality not only illustrates re-enactment's basis within historiography, but emphasizes the concept of explanation over Gadamer's concept of understanding. That is to say, re-enactment reconstructs a past event, understood as an 'individual action', and so short-circuits the appeal to a more poetic concept of understanding because understanding is anchored to the contingencies of a past reality.

Continuing the criticism of re-enactment, we can now see that the accent upon rational explanation discloses the problematic of the idealist principle of identity. I deliberately played down the importance of this principle in order to dispose of the criticisms that re-enactment is about intuition and numerical identity. But all the same the idealist use of identity is at work. In Collingwood's view, rational explanation is possible only on the assumption that the problem at hand was solved. Thus, Nelson is a worth while figure of study because he succeeded in his action. Villeneuve, on the other hand, is not a figure worth bothering with. As such only that which has succeeded is meaningful. This is a fertile principle in terms of the logic of question and

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[133]PH, 45.
[134]PH, 59.
[135]PA, 225.

answer in so far as it presupposes that a question can be recovered if we possess continuity in the form of tradition or a text etc. Yet thinking on the idealist identity principle gives no access to 'other' history. The real possibility of a different meaning in history is ignored. It is exactly this type of history which is most suspect today; for underlying and outweighing its meritorious emphasis upon continuity, of itself a corrective to an excessive atomism of historical reality, is a decision to justify the status-quo. This prompts the question, 'Is the tradition we are carried within a force of illusion rather than the transmission of truth?' Such a question, which defines the terms of the polemic between Gadamer and J. Habermas, shall be explored in Part III.

Yet irrespective of such criticism, there is another view of Collingwood's philosophy which offers the reader the opportunity to think of dialectic as a thesis about informed action in the world rather than as an appeal to the idealist principle of identity. The fundamental assertion that 'the past lives on in the present' must be taken to mean that we must school ourselves in the past in order to act appropriately in the present. The dialectician does not think of the past in order to justify that past or his own philosophy, as Rorty would have us believe, rather the past is important to the present because the past forms the condition of our ability to face the facts of our situation. Past thought invests our present thought with effective force. Such an emphasis on creative bondage, on the conditions of intellectual innovation, immediately annuls any totalizing tendency and leads us to Collingwood's *Metaphysics*. I have seen no better description of what Collingwood was attempting to disclose in that book, now expressive of his philosophy as a whole, than Rowan Williams' account of Hegel's 'fundamental insight': "history is how we do our metaphysics, how we reflect on what we non-negotiably are and what are the conditions of our concept-formation. Not that history as record delivers to us a map of the constructions of the universe, or a comprehensive account of natural kinds or a compelling thesis about the nature of reference; but engagement with history lays bare for us the character of thinking *as* engagement, as converse, conflict, negotiation, judgement and self-judgement."[136] Thus, if Collingwood's philosophy is anything as a whole, it is not a system in any monistic sense, nor is it grounded in a Realistic or Aristotelian metaphysic, but it is, like Gadamer's philosophy, a "doctrine of human finitude".[137]

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[136]Williams, 'Between Politics and Metaphysics', 15, his emphasis.
[137]MacKinnon, 'R. G. Collingwood', 174.

(III)

A Hermeneutics of Historical Consciousness

§ 1. History and Hermeneutics

In Chapter 5 I offered a brief criticism of Collingwood's account of historical reconstruction from a hermeneutical perspective. This ended by suggesting two possibilities: 1) either there is a dialectic between history and hermeneutics or 2) hermeneutics demands that history sever its links with the modern picture of the self which inhabits the scientific concept of method. I now want to amend this by saying that it is not a question of an either-or dilemma, but rather that both possibilities should be realized. Yet before I outline the dialectic between history and hermeneutics I want to make a few remarks about the status of the past in Gadamer's system.

In *Truth and Method*, the individual, here understood as the past, is but a moment in the process of understanding. This brings forth Pannenberg's criticism which I mentioned in the introduction. The complaint that Gadamer's hermeneutic avoids questions associated with historical factuality demonstrates Pannenberg's unease with a concept of understanding which cuts itself free of any past reality. This unease is, I think, expressive of the heart of the matter. In fact this distance between Pannenberg and Gadamer does, in my view, express itself as a dilemma; for I find both positions equally seductive.

On the one hand, while sympathetic to Pannenberg, I think his sort of defence against Gadamer, the defence of 'factuality', cannot be sustained. The appeal to an *irreducible* past is simply an appeal to the concept of dead matter, to the atom which exists entirely within its own place. Such a position is expressive of a "desire to bring the passing show to a halt, to secure it to immovable objects" which is something that "lies deep in the metaphysical tradition."[138] Following the ontological priority of the concept of process in which being is fundamentally motion, such an irreducible past is unfounded. Thus regardless of past reality, the past must be related to present application in order to render the ontological ground on which it rests explicit. A failure in this regard signals an acceptance of Romantic hermeneutics. Yet such a resort to Romantic hermeneutics is evidently no defence against Gadamer, because his own hermeneutic, in true Hegelian style, has already overrun it.

On the other hand, however, in the wake of Heidegger does not Gadamer's appeal to being convert the past from a past *reality* to an ontology *in toto*? In the realm of ontology empirical questions, having no relevance, simply dissolve. But does this solve the problem of the past, or does it simply avoid questions about past reality? This is the crux of Pannenberg's criticism. Gadamer's concept of understanding appeals, in my view, to Heidegger's separation of

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[138]Kerr, *Theology*, 62.

past reality from the ontological 'having-been-there'.[139] Yet the realm of 'having-been-there' which is so fruitful in terms of anti-subjectivism, does not do justice to the problem of the empirical trace so important to historical reconstruction. It is the trace which permits the historian to argue back from the imaginary to the real. It is true, as we shall see, that Gadamer does recognize the importance of historical work, but the tendency is always towards a self-sufficient philology which is evident most clearly in the abrupt transition in *Truth and Method* from history to linguisticality.

It does therefore appear as if it is possible to make a valid distinction *within* hermeneutics between the type of understanding characteristic of historical work and a more 'philological' understanding envisaged by Gadamer. This does of course echo the distinction in scope between Collingwood's doctrine of re-enactment and Gadamer's 'universal philology'. While, therefore, the appeal to the ontological priority of being over a subjective epistemology is a real advance, we must avoid 'canonizing' ontology to such an extent that it is given free rein to obliterate the empirical element proper to historical work.

In speaking of a dialectic between history and hermeneutics I am referring to both an essential relationship and to a tension without recourse to open conflict which exists between the two. But this categorization is not adequate, because the dialectic does not really contain hermeneutics but only its various incarnations. If, for argument's sake, we assume the universality of Gadamer's hermeneutics, then, on a reading of *Truth and Method*, art, historiography, and linguisticality are its three (principle) modes. Yet this does after all give a place to a dialectic between history and hermeneutics, because each mode can be considered independently and in succession. But more decisively, an independent analysis of history is justified in so far as modern historical method was forged by the same tools which shaped the revolt against 'unfounded reason' (tradition). This suggests that there really is something different about history, making it irreducible to hermeneutics. Gadamer might seem to offer hope of this when, by including historical method within hermeneutics, he recognizes that, while it grew, so to speak, by devouring its authorities, the critical impulse is not to be abolished, simply displaced. But the displacement of criticism, achieved in the transference of autonomy from the historian to the text (tradition), is a radical step; for it inextricably binds historical method to hermeneutics. Taken in themselves, at a high level of generality, there is a real difference between history and hermeneutics; but this difference, while important, can only be sustained if we reject the ontological priority of hermeneutics.

Starting from the position of a dialectic between history and hermeneutics, we can see that they can be distinguished by their respective programmes. While the historian reconstructs a

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[139]"A Dasein which no longer exists, however, is not past, in the ontologically strict sense; it is rather 'having-been-there'." Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 432.

past which does not now exist, the inquiry always moving towards a reconstructed whole, Gadamer presupposes the whole as a world of and to itself. So conceived, it is Gadamer's use of this *aesthetic* that creates a hiatus between history and hermeneutics. For is this emphasis on the self-presentation of a text not an echo (in secular terms) of Bultmann's theology?

> To understand ... does not mean primarily to reason one's way back into the past, but to have a present involvement in what is said. It is not really about a relationship between persons, between the reader and the author, ... but about sharing in the communication that the text gives us ... The understanding of something written is not a reproduction of something that is past, but the sharing of a present meaning.[140]

The stress upon self-presentation, upon an aesthetic whole, short-circuits the work of reconstruction. It is on this point that the stark contrast between Collingwood and Gadamer is disclosed. While Collingwood, for example, places archaeological remains at the centre of his inquiry, they are problematic for Gadamer: "Only in an extended sense do non-literary monuments present a hermeneutical task, for they cannot be *understood of themselves*."[141] This appeal to the self-evident, so alien to historical reconstruction, reveals the different attitude to authority that exists between Collingwood (*qua* historian) and Gadamer. Collingwood's use of 'authority' is clearly derogatory. The reduction of history to the testimony of 'authorities' depends upon not using one's reason at all. This is a clear echo of Descartes' methodic doubt.[142] In contrast, Gadamer wants to rehabilitate the concept of authority. No longer must it be equated with blind obedience; rather, it must be seen in the context of legitimate prejudices.

This is a (re)discovery of the first order; and like the work of Wittgenstein, Gadamer's hermeneutic delivers us from the yoke of absolute autonomy. Yet on the grounds of the limited dialectic between historical reconstruction and hermeneutics that I have sketched, questions come crowding in: 'Is this discovery meant to effect a revolution in scientific method?' 'Are we meant to suppose that the historian should give up historical work because it is parasitic upon a Cartesian ego?' In other words, if the paradigm of self-understanding has moved from autonomy towards creative dependence, is it still legitimate to pursue practices which do not, as it were, address themselves to contemporary problems but are, in effect, part of the problem of 'modernity'? Such concerns betray a belief that in order to preserve its very nature it is necessary for history to stand outside hermeneutics. Here of course the seductive capacity of Enlightenment notions of autonomy and authority reveal themselves. By presupposing the Enlightenment's appeal to *universal* autonomy, the limited dialectic between history and hermeneutics cannot conceive of authority in any but a derogatory way. As Ricoeur declares: why "is it so difficult for us to

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[140]TM, 353f.
[141]TM, 352, my emphasis.
[142]IH, 209.

conceive of a dependence without heteronomy? Is it not because we too often and too quickly think of a will that submits and not enough of an imagination that opens itself?"[143] This heightened sense of autonomy obscures the distinction between historical and positivisitic method, because it necessitates a divorce between history and hermeneutics. But the logic of question and answer makes this unnecessary; for while positivism wants to extinguish prejudice to let the past speak, Collingwood's logic works on the assumption that knowledge is obtained by asking the questions which 'arise'. It is true that Collingwood was himself somewhat seduced by the Enlightenment notion of autonomy. But he saw more clearly in the *Metaphysics* that to ask is always to respond to something already given. Again, further reflection would have removed from his 'imaginary picture of the past' any suggestion of subjectivity, bringing to light Ricoeur's emphasis on an imagination that opens itself. This reflection, however, need not go beyond the bounds of Collingwood's work, for it is easy to derive such an implication out of what he said. The concept of 'scientific' history, therefore, can be said to be 'post-critical' in the further (and proper) sense that it presupposes narrative unity.

Assuming the ontological priority of hermeneutics changes its relationship to history. As a universal aspect of philosophy, and not "a mere subordinate discipline within the arena of the *Geisteswissenschaften*",[144] hermeneutics becomes the ground of history. One of the central aims of *Truth and Method* is to confirm this universal aspect by demonstrating, in the wake of Heidegger, that tradition binds the historical consciousness to things already said and preserves (*bewahrt*) the possibility of our hearing it. Thus, 'effective-history' becomes a synonym for what is handed down, a self-presenting tradition, which makes possible the goal of hermeneutics: the equation of understanding with truth. Gadamer universalizes Dilthey's concept of understanding[145] by making authority, tradition, and language, with their separate but similar conceptions of the unfounded, into 'primordial' terms. Autonomy is, therefore, taken away from the subject in the universal sense understood by the Enlightenment, and given to the self-presenting tradition. Consequently, before the historian is in a position to judge tradition he finds himself situated in an order of meaning and of possible truth. As Gadamer declares: "At any rate understanding in the human sciences shares one fundamental condition with the continuity of traditions, namely, that it lets itself be addressed by tradition."[146] Yet because that which is handed down presents truth claims the historian *must* use his method to assess these claims. In other words, the act of historical research itself is both critical and a transmission of tradition.[147] This abolishes the abstract antithesis between tradition and historical research which determines

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[143]Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, (ed.) L. S. Mudge, 117, cited in Lash, *The Beginning*, 88.
[144]Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 19, cited in Lash, *Theology on the Way*, 224 n. 53.
[145]Gadamer, 'Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and the Critique of Ideology', 275.
[146]TM, 251.
[147]TM, 253.

the limited dialectic between history and hermeneutics.[148] Historical research, from the perspective of the 'universal', is simply hermeneutics.

By enveloping the critical aspect of historical research within an anti-subjectivist appeal to tradition Gadamer reverses the priority of method. This is important to recognize, because the limited dialectic between history and hermeneutics generates an either-or dilemma: either criticism or acceptance of a self-sufficient text. But Gadamer does not want to abolish historical method. Rather, he wants, in a 'post-critical' manner, to give a secondary role to historical reconstruction. By this step he is attacking not critical research, but the positivistic idea of a 'judging' consciousness unrestrained by any prejudices. Hermeneutics demands, he declares, "a sharpening of the methodological self-consciousness of science",[149] by which he means that the practitioners of *Wissenschaft* must become more conscious of their own prejudices. In other words, by transferring the principle of universal autonomy from the historian to tradition Gadamer does not annul autonomy outright. On the contrary, the historian displays the autonomy proper to his discipline (regional autonomy) when he works with individual sources. For each text, while part of a transmitted tradition, is at the same time "an historically intended separate object"[150] open to critical scrutiny. Thus, while work with the sources is an extension of the principle of methodic doubt, history should not be criticized for this.

It is true, however, that Gadamer's goal of a "constantly self-renewing contemporaneity"[151] shows that art is his model for hermeneutics. This ontological model is always in danger of obliterating the empirical element, because its *dominium* denies the distinction between historical reconstruction and a poetics. This may provide a rationale for those who seek an outright rejection of the Enlightenment, but such conservatism must not be allowed to affect historiography in the sense of the historian's work with the sources. Were that to happen, the necessary distinction between textual interpretation and reconstruction would be obliterated. That is to say, history's attempt to discover what the text bears witness to would give way to a simple rendering of the meaning of the text for the present.

§ 2. Tradition and the Critique of Ideologies

At stake in the polemic between Gadamer and Habermas is the question of the universality of the hermeneutical phenomenon. Starting from the linguisticality of being whereby language is both the medium and register of *all* understanding, Gadamer proposes the thesis that societal tradition perpetuates itself in terms of this linguisticality. Tradition becomes a synonym for language in so far as understanding is made possible through the preservation of an order of meaning which

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[148]TM, 251.
[149]TM, 265.
[150]TM, 262.
[151]Gadamer, RHCI, 275.

projects a truth claim. The anti-subjectivist appeal to tradition receives its power at this point, because in order to judge (criticize) we must first accept tradition. We must in fact presume the truth (*Für-wahr-halten*) of that which comes to us *in order* to understand. Gadamer thereby rejects the antithetical relationship between authority and reason promulgated by the Enlightenment.

It is here that Habermas' critique of ideologies sees a limit to the universality of hermeneutics. While Habermas has integrated the hermeneutical reflection of *Truth and Method* into his own criticism of the social sciences, he denies hermeneutics' claim to universality on the grounds of an appeal to the antithetical relationship between authority and reason. After discussing the extent to which scientific theories have a prelinguistic foundation, he makes a distinction between reflective activity within language and the activity of language itself.[152] Whereas Gadamer's hermeneutics attempts to eliminate false prejudices which originate within language, Habermas' appeal to a critique of ideologies ('depth-hermeneutics') attempts to eliminate systematic distortions which originate with language itself. Habermas therefore presupposes a theory of language as a whole, namely, a theory of communicative competence[153] which reaches, so to speak, behind a hermeneutical understanding that "begins, in each case, from a preconception defined by the tradition which is formed and altered *within* linguistic communication."[154] This reflection throws light on an important distinction between a 'prejudice' and an 'ideology'. Ideology is not the same as prejudice. An ideology is not an implicit influence upon understanding; rather, it articulates a claim by disguising itself as a truth-claim. It is the counterfeit of truth. Such a distinction, in Habermas' view, makes it impossible for Gadamer's hermeneutics to disentangle truth from distortion. For whereas hermeneutics has a normative function in discarding prejudices that prevent understanding, it cannot but repeat a systematic distortion because it is enclosed within the walls of that distortion.

The purpose of this argument is to show that hermeneutics' claim to universality finds its limit in the language systems of science where 'correct usage' is defined by a *theory* of communicative competence and not the *rhetoric* of hermeneutics. Thus the appeal to a prelinguistic foundation (itself left unproven) signals Habermas' belief that tradition must submit itself to the law of the better argument. This of course allows the critic of ideology to stand outside the hermeneutical phenomenon, because systematic distortions can "be 'understood' without involvement in the hermeneutical problematic."[155]

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[152]Habermas, 'On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality', 300ff.
[153]OHCU, 312.
[154]OHCU, 311, my emphasis.
[155]OHCU, 301.

As it stands, Habermas' argument appears very plausible indeed. Even though it is founded on principles wholly opposed to those argued in the present work, the distinction between a prejudice and an ideology is a permanent gain. We must, therefore, concede that Habermas' appeal to ideology takes us further than Gadamer's appeal to prejudice. However, at stake in the present inquiry is the incorporation of 'ideology' into a hermeneutics of historical consciousness. Such an aim is achieved once the limitations of the critique of ideologies are revealed.

Habermas' argument begins from a materialist critique of an essentially Hegelian appeal to an "ontological priority of linguistic tradition over all possible critiques."[156] In Habermas' view, a sole emphasis on a linguistic tradition ignores the material conditions of labour and domination, and "ties itself to the idealist presupposition that linguistically articulated consciousness determines the material practice of life."[157] This is of course a clear echo of Marx's quarrel with Hegel.[158] According to Habermas', Gadamer converts Hegel's famous phrase 'the real is the rational' (or more correctly in German, "Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich, und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig"[159]) into his own equally famous phrase "being that can be understood is language".[160] But while Part III of *Truth and Method* gives a rather one-sided exposition of the universal character of linguisticality, in subsequent work Gadamer shows that the ontological priority of linguisticality "means simply that there is no social reality, with all its concrete compulsions, which does not also exhibit itself in a linguistically articulated consciousness."[161] In other words, the pursuit of a reality independent of language is the pursuit of an unintelligible realm, one that we could *never* understand. Habermas might reply by suggesting that this is merely a circular argument; but as Collingwood suggests: "[h]ow can we ever satisfy ourselves that the principles on which we think are true, except by going on thinking according to those principles, and seeing whether unanswerable criticisms of them emerge as we work?"[162]

The appeal to ideological distortion over unconscious prejudice shows that Habermas finds it difficult to accept the limit imposed on the autonomy of the subject by Gadamer's resort to tradition. According to Habermas, tradition has a nullifying effect on criticism and prevents it from getting, so to speak, to the bottom of something. For while, according to Gadamer, we must concede authority to tradition in order to understand, Habermas' holds out the prospect that

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[156]OHCU, 313.
[157]Habermas, 'A Review of Gadamer's *Truth and Method*', 361, cited in Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 382.
[158]"It is not men's consciousness which determines their existence, but on the contrary *their social existence which determines their consciousness*." K. Marx and F. Engels, *Über Kunst und Literatur*, Vol. 1, 74, their emphasis, cited in Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 382.
[159]Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 6.
[160]TM, 432.
[161]Gadamer, RHCI, 287.
[162]IH, 230.

linguisticality itself may be "the product of pseudocommunication."[163] Habermas is attempting to uphold the antithetical relationship between authority and reason by giving the critic of ideology the power to reach back into the origin of 'things-in-themselves'. His model for this is what he calls 'scenic understanding' which he derives from psychoanalysis. "Scenic understanding", Habermas declares, "is distinct from simple hermeneutical understanding by virtue of its explanatory power; it unlocks the meaning of specifically unintelligible expressions only insofar as it can also successfully reconstruct the original scene and thus bring to light the conditions responsible for the genesis of the difficulty itself."[164] He goes on in a manner reminiscent of Collingwood's 'outside-inside' metaphor, "The What - the meaningful content of the systematically distorted expression - cannot be 'understood' if the Why - the origin of the symptomatic scene in the conditions responsible for the systematic distortion itself - cannot be 'explained' at the same time."[165] With this thesis he is, I think, making two related claims.

The first claim can be split into two separate points. The appeal to 'scenic understanding' though basic to 'pathological' situations is reminiscent of Collingwood's emphasis on the explanation of an 'individual action'. The reconstruction of the original scene acts as a protest against an over-zealous appeal to ontology which is used (in this instance) to *prevent* successful explanation. Habermas' resort to 'scenic understanding' is deliberately intended to disclose the *political* character of the appeal to ontology. To reiterate an earlier point: ontology removes the empirical evidence from the scene. Consequently, that the event even happened can be denied. Secondly, and more radically, Habermas' is suggesting that in some cases true understanding is only reached if that which has come down to us in the form of tradition is rejected outright. He is, in other words, following the Enlightenment's principle of freedom from constraint: everything that prevents the realization of freedom must be rejected. But such a fact can be accommodated within hermeneutics without too much trouble if we assume that the ontology of linguisticality still forms the ground of a tradition. Such a point is, I believe, inadvertently conceded by Habermas when he assumes that an ideology possesses a meaningful content which makes it intelligible. The ontological conception of hermeneutics cannot, then, be completely ideological, because even an ideology rests on something that is not. But while he agrees with Gadamer that "every misunderstanding presuppose[s] the existence of something like a 'standing agreement',"[166] the affirmation of this agreement is so defined as to deny this inadvertency. The agreement, according to Habermas, is "guaranteed only by *that* consensus which might be reached under the idealized conditions to be found in unrestrained and dominance-free communication, and which

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[163]OHCU, 314.
[164]OHCU, 305.
[165]OHCU, 305.
[166]OHCU, 313.

could, in the course of time, be affirmed to exist."[167] In Habermas' view, Gadamer fails to recognize this, and so is unable to distinguish between 'dogmatic acknowledgement' and 'true consensus'.[168] The appeal to such a consensus clearly shows that Habermas distrusts tradition *per se*. Truth is essentially transcendent, in the future. It is to be anticipated. But on pain of falling into a 'negative dialectic' which projects itself into a unrealizable utopia, this consensus must search for evidence of truth already at work. As such the critique of ideologies can only be a critique of that which already exists; it must therefore assume a given. This makes the critic of ideology dependent upon an ontology. Yet this ontology is not the same ontology that supports tradition. This can be demonstrated by illustrating the importance of Gadamer's appeal to dogmatic acknowledgement. Such an appeal does *not* signify freedom from force (think, for instance, of Collingwood's description of tradition as a *force*), but rather freedom from negative force. Because he upholds the antithesis between authority and reason, Habermas is unable to distinguish between different forms of force. Now, according to Gadamer, legitimate authority derives its life, "[n]ot from dogmatic force, but from dogmatic acknowledgement."[169] This means that one concedes to authority a superiority in knowledge and judgement. Such acknowledgement is still 'force', because it is a rhetorical explication that convinces without being able to prove.[170] This is anathema to Habermas, because his distrust of tradition *per se* discloses his belief in a primordial ontology of negativity over-against an ontology of positivity.[171] 'Positivity' is entirely in the future. I am suggesting, in other words, that Habermas' unconstrained, dominance-free consensus, paradoxically, presupposes "an anarchistic utopia."[172] This can be remedied only by bringing the critique of ideologies into line with the ontology proper to hermeneutics. Such a move reveals Habermas' second claim.

The appeal to 'scenic understanding' suggests that Habermas believes that by unmasking systematic distortion the critic of ideology gives agents a direct grasp upon reality. Yet our relation to reality is never one of direct participation. As Collingwood understood, we cannot think through our absolute presuppositions as they are in themselves; rather they themselves provide the means of thinking. Habermas implicitly concedes this when he assumes that ideology rests on something prior to itself. Therefore, even the critique of ideology must judge tradition from within the practices it encourages. Critical theory cannot determine the validity of a tradition as a 'theory', but it can criticize the complex of practices that determine what a tradition

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[167]OHCU, 313, his emphasis.
[168]OHCU, 316.
[169]RHCI, 285.
[170]RHCI, 279.
[171]This contrast is, of course, similar to J. Milbank's thesis which contrasts true (Augustinian) Christianity's 'ontology of peace' with modern secularism's 'ontology of violence'. See Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*.
[172]RHCI, 291.

is. Consequently, we must broaden the meaning of 'prejudice' so that it includes ideology. This can be accomplished if ideology is interpreted dialectically; that is, both *positively* and negatively. Drawing upon Karl Mannheim's *Ideologie and Utopie* Ricoeur argues that our relation to reality is mediated within the imaginary framework of ideology and utopia.[173] This at once undermines the tendency of critical theory to believe that unmasking ideology gives social agents a direct grasp upon reality. Before it has a distorting role, ideology has a constituting function. This brings it into line with an understanding of tradition. "Every authority, in fact, seeks to make itself legitimate." But "[t]he claim coming from the authority always contains more than the belief which is accorded this authority."[174] It is this 'gap' between ideology and reality that opens up its pathological function and our ability to criticize it. Ideology attempts to cover over this gap by repeating itself, but in the realm of projective being this attempt unmasks itself. This is because in its attempt to hold on to the past, ideology sees itself as always and already complete, and as such is unable to bear the weight of accumulated experience. Holding on to the past in this way converts it into a distorting ideology, because its perpetrators are unwilling to recognize development. In this respect, criticism is able to show that ideology, so to speak, 'keeps things as they are'. As a result, the critical question now becomes a question internal to tradition: not only one of "distinguishing the true prejudices, by which we understand, from the false ones by which we misunderstand"[175] but of distinguishing between positive and negative ideologies. Hermeneutics must, in other words, include within itself a critical theory of society if it is not to remain a mere bastion of the elite within that society. Consequently, voice is given among other things, to the 'history' of the dispossessed and forgotten. This reverses the emphasis on what is successful. No longer is something true because it is successful, but successful (successfully brought to memory) because it is true.[176]

But of course a sole emphasis on emancipatory praxis cannot encompass everything we need in order to speak the truth. Contrary to Habermas' polemic against tradition, we cannot escape from tradition; as Collingwood never tired of reminding us, the past lives on in the present. In this light, the tradition itself becomes the vehicle of criticism. The focus now shifts away from a progressive betterment of society towards the constant temptation of the present to betray the memory of the past. Tradition, in other words, can act as a *subversive* memory. This must not be understood as a Romantic theory about the remembrance of a lost eternity, or as a political statement about maintaining the status quo; rather, it is a theological thesis regarding the memory of a concrete past. Whereas critical theory tends towards a critique of the present

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[173]Ricoeur, 'Imagination in Discourse', 3-22.
[174]'Imagination in Discourse', 17.
[175]TM, 266.
[176]E. Schillebeeckx, *The Understanding*, 118-19.

situation in the interests of a future without content, I want to emphasize a past that holds within itself the possibility of a content (a praxis) that the present is always tempted to forget. This praxis is a possibility, since it has been shown to us in the past.

§ 3. Concluding Remarks

This completes the investigation into the historical and hermeneutical dimensions of re-enactment. The emphasis on the historical side has many valid points that any attempted reconstruction of the situation of historical agents must take into consideration. Furthermore, re-enactment is consistent, within its historical intention, with post-Romantic hermeneutics.

In the next chapter my aim is to emphasize the historical intention of re-enactment by bringing it into dialogue with Edward Schillebeeckx's concern for the historical Jesus. The focus falls on Schillebeeckx's desire to assign to Jesus' self-understanding a role in the interpretation of his life and death which other theologians, Bultmann to mention the most famous, would reserve for the early Christians. Such an approach is, I think, ideally suited to re-enactment. This focus will not ignore hermeneutics. On the contrary, I shall review Schillebeeckx's attempt to translate the terms of Christ's divinity into the concept of universal significance. It is my belief that Schillebeeckx's christology with its historical concern set within a hermeneutical intention is adequate to the task of providing an example of re-enactment in a theological context.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Appropriating Schillebeeckx: the Rejection and Death of Jesus

Introduction

As the chapter proceeds I shall demonstrate that Schillebeeckx's account of the rejection and death of Jesus is an excellent illustration of re-enactment. This in no way commits the following argument to an exclusive dependence upon Schillebeeckx exegetical conclusions. While I shall for the most part follow Schillebeeckx, I intend only to show that the structure of his account, in its overall scope, is an excellent example of re-enactment.

Part I offers a brief excursus on Schillebeeckx which is not meant as a summary of his vast theological *oeuvre*. My purpose is rather to provide sufficient knowledge of some of the basic ideas underlying his theology in order to take us forward. Following this I shall give an outline of his understanding of the place of historical research in christology. Unlike much recent New Testament exegesis from Bultmann onwards, Schillebeeckx wants to assign a much more creative role in the development of the Christian tradition to Jesus' own self-understanding. In this respect his approach mirrors Collingwood's emphasis on historical agency.

The question to be faced in Part II is whether re-enactment, which is really after the self-understanding of an historical agent, is an avenue of historical research that can be effectively or even possibly pursued. Bultmann and those who were influenced by him, argued that the attempt to derive Jesus' self-understanding from the gospel narratives was bound to fail because those narratives were confessional statements concerning the figure of Christ. While granting that the gospel narratives do not always lend themselves to bold and confident historical assertion, I shall argue that Bultmann's position is open to criticism on the grounds that it is based on certain prior theological assumptions which, in the light of an exposition of Bultmann's general approach, are unwarranted.

Part III, which is composed of two sections, will present Schillebeeckx's account of Jesus' approach to his own death as an example of re-enactment. I have chosen the rejection and death of Jesus because it is here that Jesus' individuality as an historical agent comes into sharpest focus; in his approach to death the bond between intention and action is more fully disclosed. The statement 'Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem' pervades this whole section, my intention being to reveal the necessity of Jesus' own self-understanding to the bearing of the story and its outcome. In the second section I shall connect this chapter with the hermeneutical emphasis of the last by showing how Schillebeeckx identifies Jesus' universal significance as the form in which, for today, the issue of his divinity is most effectively addressed.

(I)

An Interpretative Key to Schillebeeckx's Theology

God's grace is not revealed either from above or from below, but horizontally, in the encounter of human beings with one another within our human history.[1]

In order to appreciate the subtlety proper to such an assertion it is necessary to show that, in many respects, it is characteristic of a shift in Schillebeeckx's later theology.

Without documenting it here,[2] this shift can be characterized in general as a realization on Schillebeeckx's part that one cannot ever achieve, as he had earlier thought possible, a purely theoretical grasp of a totality of meaning. There was a turn in his thought, as it were, from an emphasis on theoretical participation in, to a practical anticipation of, universal meaning.[3] Consequently, Schillebeeckx's theology is orientated to the future and eschatology, so that discipleship is a matter of anticipating this future as is indicated in the title of his book *God the Future of Man*, in Christian (liberating) praxis.[4] Following the accent upon anticipation over against participation, Schillebeeckx identifies God, understood through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, with universal meaning so that God becomes, without being collapsed into, a synonym for 'future'. In this way words such as 'God' and 'transcendence' are envisaged as always ahead of human beings, in the future. This not only gives a social and political tenor to Schillebeeckx's understanding of salvation, but more importantly, 'places' transcendence on the horizontal horizon of experience. Schillebeeckx, then, has integrated into his theology of revelation the modern embargo against any spatial or hierarchical concept of a three-tier universe, of a world beyond and above this world of ours, by concentrating on the theme of the future. Such an emphasis on the 'horizontal' as opposed to a 'below' or an 'above' is carried over into the *Christ* volume in his appeal to the concept of 'reality': "where reality offers resistance to such outlines and implicitly therefore guides them in an indirect way, we come into contact with a reality which is *independent* of us, which is not thought of, made or projected by men. At this point we have a revelation of that which cannot be manipulated, a 'transcendent' power, something that comes 'from elsewhere'."[5] It is evident that 'reality' for Schillebeeckx functions as a critical tool of any ideology, but also as the limit of the world, without any implication that there is a world 'beyond'. It is the limit in the sense that it is inexhaustible, because transcendent.

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[1]Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 49.
[2]For a useful summary of this shift see P. Kennedy, *Schillebeeckx*, 3-4, 42-51, 98-108.
[3]*Jesus*, 618f.
[4]Although Schillebeeckx never defines his use of 'praxis' it is clear that he means by it an indivisible interplay between an action and theory. Praxis must have a theoretical component in order to measure its legitimacy. Christian praxis is praxis of the kingdom. That is, a refusal, in the name of Christ, of oppressive power at the same time as a life spent in service of the poorest and weakest in society.
[5]*Christ*, 34, his emphasis.

independent, in the future. This is *not* the same as Kant's 'thing-in-itself' which is understood as something outside the autonomous (invented) sphere of reason.[6] Schillebeeckx refuses to look 'outside' or 'beyond' to another world. Instead he looks for "a sense [of] the depth or the height *within* the direct encounter or the historical togetherness of human beings in the world"; "a perspective is opened up *within the horizon of our experience* on the meaning which cannot be reduced to the history of our projects ... and yet reveals itself in this very history of projects."[7] By refusing to place a limit on the world in terms of a purely autonomous sphere - which in itself presupposes a sphere outside[8] - Schillebeeckx can appeal to what he calls the 'depth-dimension' of reality or again the 'surplus-vested-in-reality'. He rejects the Kantian emphasis on possible experience, because it holds that experience must conform to the conditions laid down in Newton's mechanics. In other words, certain experience, principally that which can be verified as real on a strictly empirical basis, is legitimate but everything else is simply interpretation: the non-believer trusts his experiences, whereas the believer builds castles on the same experiences.[9] On this model, the theologian is relegated to fighting with the enthusiast, occultist, and therapist, over the scraps that fall from the physicist's table. By contrast, Schillebeeckx's emphasis on an all pervasive and inexhaustible reality means that God's grace or transcendence is brought into the field of human experience: "So the religious man also *experiences* grace; he does not just interpret it."[10] This shows that the 'immanence of transcendence' is basic to Schillebeeckx's later theology: "the *Deus, intimior intimo meo*, that is, ... the creative God who in and via our human history takes absolute initiatives in a manner that transcends through immanence or through a wholly intimate nearness, cannot be measured ... by any kind of non-religious approach."[11]

Following the shift from theoretical participation to practical anticipation, priority is given to practice over theory, since it is in the former where the surplus-vested-in-reality can be experienced. Yet he does not reject the advance of natural science since the Enlightenment.[12] Rather, he believes that reality is not exhausted by scientific analysis. Thus, when discussing the sphere of historical-critical method, he does not criticize this sphere as perhaps the logic of his position might suggest, but instead places it under the realm of the theoretical which as method is legitimate in itself. In its own sphere, the theoretical, historical method is legitimate; it is not reductionist as such, it rather asks limited questions and therefore receives limited answers. It

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[6]Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 84.
[7]*Christ*, 48, 49, his emphasis.
[8]Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, 1, 110-15.
[9]*Christ*, 54.
[10]*Christ*, 54.
[11]*Jesus*, 654f. And again, "In linguistic terms, the concept of 'revelation' is a protest against the exclusiveness of language which is directly descriptive and assertive.." *Christ*, 46. Of course behind the accent on the immanence of transcendence is the doctrine of creation. See *God Among Us*, 91-102.
[12]See his 'Christian Obedience and its Pathology'.

only becomes reductionist if the questions asked are taken as adequate to reality as a whole. Therefore, in his *Jesus* book, Schillebeeckx actually uses historical method to disclose something of the nature of faith. The necessary silence about Jesus' ultimate identity that historical study displays, really does throw light on the limits of historical method. Yet this is not used in a negative fashion in order to prohibit the possibility that faith is related to history, such that faith must be something wholly private or subjective in character. Schillebeeckx does not adjudge historical-critical method 'methodologically atheist' which is what happened under the weight of the positivistic principle of analogy; rather, the truth-conditions pertaining to statements which involve the mystery of divine action do not lie open to historical research. Historical research is a necessary condition of such a statement's truth, but it can never be a sufficient necessary condition of its truth. Yet while the sufficient truth condition of divine action is not open to empirical methods, the resources of historical research are not an alternative to the resources of faith, but are those resources in their contingent and empirical form.[13] This of course follows from Schillebeeckx's emphasis on the immanence of transcendence which discloses the inexhaustible nature of reality.

§ 1. Following a Faith-motivated Historical Approach: a 'Theology of Jesus'

Placing the *Jesus* volume in opposition to Bultmann made an account of the validity of the historical-critical method for christology necessary, because while Bultmann's influence was declining it had by no means reached its nadir. However, it would be wrong to suggest that Schillebeeckx was attempting to go back before Bultmann in a search for a pre-kerygmatic Jesus.[14] On the contrary, he demonstrates a remarkable sensitivity - something hardly present in Pannenberg's earlier work, *Jesus-God and Man* - to the importance of differing approaches to the gospel texts. It is such insight which provided the means for his assertion that taking an historical-critical approach to the gospels relativises the whole venture.[15] With such an insight I wholeheartedly agree. There is, in other words, no trace of a non-dogmatic Jesus in the gospels and neither is Schillebeeckx after such a Jesus. The idea that the historical approach is a relative procedure shows that it has no absolute status as 'the' method which exegetes must follow. In contrast, the early Christians, Schillebeeckx declares, discovered in Jesus "something that cannot be pinned down directly, on an empirical basis, but that to any open-minded person confronted with Jesus in a living community is going to present itself as something gratuitous, as 'given in evidence'".[16] This statement is careful to suggest that there is more to Jesus than what the results of historical research can tell us. Failure to heed such a remark, Schillebeeckx comments, runs

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[13]Lash, *A Matter of Hope* for this idea in a different context, 144.
[14]W. Kasper, 'Liberale Christologie', 357-60, cited in Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 29, 144 n. 7.
[15]*Jesus*, 40.
[16]*Jesus*, 46.

the risk of converting the epistemological basis of historical method into an ontology, whereby 'occurrent reality' (the course of historical events) is collapsed into 'historical method' (the job of the historian) so that 'reality' becomes equivalent to what the historian can say about it.[17] This necessitates not only the pursuit of other approaches, but a broader conception of history similar to that sketched in Chapter 5. Yet Schillebeeckx does not think that faith is a kind of gnosis which can get at facts unavailable to historical research; rather following the emphasis on the 'surplus-vested-in-reality', faith can disclose the real significance of facts, which a purely historical assessment fails to discover.[18] Use of the phrase 'given in evidence' is suggestive of the belief that Christianity cannot rest, as Bultmann did, ultimately, have it rest, upon a purely autonomous *kerygma*.

Fundamental to Schillebeeckx's approach is an attempt to relativize the abrupt discontinuity kerygma theologians had posited between Jesus and the Christ. The constraining power of what is normative does not reside solely in the *kerygma* but in the *memoria Jesu*. In other words, he is careful to show that his desire to demonstrate the continuity between 'Jesus' and 'Christ' is not meant as a way of seeking out a purely historical Jesus which can then be used as a stick with which to beat kerygma theologians or ecclesiastical authorities; rather, his purpose is, as it were, to trace the phenomenon of 'Jesus and his first believing disciples' as an occurrent reality and to construct a 'theology of Jesus' and not a 'pure' history of Jesus. It is such an approach which leads him to say that "[t]he only question ... is whether this concrete articulation [expression of salvation] is indeed partly determined by the concrete reality that was offered and came to them from Jesus, or derives solely from the socio-cultural context in which these people found themselves."[19] And this task, if successful, will constitute a re-enactment as Collingwood envisaged. By stressing a 'theology of Jesus' (rather than a christology) Schillebeeckx is pointing to two very important ideas: in the first place, history and empirical knowledge of the life of Jesus with his disciples are present in the gospels, but present in the language of faith. So that even during his life it is the disciples' faithful response (or lack of it) to the life of Jesus that is important and subsequently reported. Secondly, the critical impulse so evident in the 'Quest for the Historical Jesus' is de-centred and the *a priori* assumption of that quest, that a removal of the so-called 'dogmatic superstructure' present in the New Testament would disclose the real historical Jesus, is undermined. In contrast, there is a sophisticated hermeneutic at work in Schillebeeckx's text which recognizes, and the phrase 'theology of Jesus' is the key to it, that any reality is articulated in models of thought which cannot simply be stripped away to reveal an historical essence or kernel which is somehow value free. The 'models of thought' used to express

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[17]*Jesus*, 68f.
[18]*Jesus*, 68.
[19]*Jesus*, 69.

the reality actually interpretatively disclose that reality so that it is a matter of 'translation' rather than a re-interpretation of a reducible essence. That is to say, one cannot ever go all the way down and reach an essence, whether that be of a formal *kerygma* or a purely historical Jesus, which can then become the foundation of Christianity. But this does not nullify the critical impulse, it only displaces it. So Jesus of Nazareth is still the "constant anti-pole of the Christ-confessing churches, even though this Opposite Presence - criterion and norm - can never be grasped *per se* but only apprehended in the process whereby the Christian churches let themselves be defined by Jesus."[20] The restraint of such a passage indicates Schillebeeckx's intention to do justice both to the believing community as the 'constant unitive factor'[21] in interpretation - thus showing sensitivity to Bultmann's instincts if not his conclusions - and also to the fact that although mediated through the believing community, it is Jesus who is actively shaping the response in so far as it is done in an openness to the mystery present as the *memoria Jesu* in the Church. Thus the historical-critical approach is placed under the proviso that "the difficulty about reaching a scrupulous interpretation of Jesus ... is the orbit within which it has to be achieved."[22] Speaking theologically, then, the historical approach is set within the scope of a 'theology of Jesus', and as such it is "bounded, that is, put in its place or kept within its proper bounds, by a faith-directed interpretation."[23] For Schillebeeckx this remains the only proper starting point. In essence, while in general the historical approach is engaged because on the one hand, the 'founder of Christianity' lived a particular life at a particular time, and on the other, because one cannot simply ignore almost two thousand years of history, Schillebeeckx uses the historical-critical method in order to demonstrate that there is some measure of continuity between the historical Jesus and the Christ proclaimed by the Church which he concentrates into the theme of Jesus' self-understanding. He does not reject the Bultmannian emphasis on *kerygma*; rather his whole approach attempts to provide historical content to the *kerygma* to prevent it assuming the character of an *Ideengeschichte*. It is Schillebeeckx's hope that tracing the 'life of Jesus with his first believing disciples' in a faith-motivated historical approach will open up the possibility of faith in Jesus-the-Crucified-and-Risen One to people who have ears to hear and eyes to see. That is to say, the believer will see God's saving action realized in Jesus' life, which without the material about Jesus recovered by the historical method would not be possible. "This then is the importance of the historical study of Jesus for making up, concretely, the content of faith."[24]

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[20]*Jesus*, 76.
[21]*Jesus*, 52-7.
[22]*Jesus*, 76.
[23]*Jesus*, 71.
[24]*Jesus*, 75.

(II)

Re-enactment Contra Bultmann

§ 1. Excursus on Bultmann

The greatest embarrassment to the attempt to reconstruct a picture of Jesus' character is the fact that we cannot know how Jesus understood his end, his death.[25]

This statement, which is derived from a one-sided *Kerygma* theology, reflects Bultmann's general approach to the question of historical research: such research is of no use where Jesus' theological significance is concerned. In contrast, Bultmann, following Dilthey and Heidegger, prefers to talk of the 'historicity of man', meaning man's consciousness of the relativity and finiteness of every historical creation, leading to the realization of existential freedom.[26] In this respect, Bultmann searched the Gospels less for documents pertaining to the life of Jesus, and much more for primitive Christianity's eschatological interpretation of human existence.[27] It is understandable, under such conditions, that Bultmann saw re-enactment less in terms of historical research and more in terms of historicity. While it can be said that the theme of historicity is an aspect of re-enactment (this was after all demonstrated in the previous chapter), on the level of historical understanding, re-enactment mirrors exactly what Bultmann most fervently disallows. Re-enactment stands for the historian's pursuit of the motives, intentions and actions of historical agents in order to advance an explanation of an historical event. Nevertheless, do not the gospels present a difficulty in this respect? The gospels are not texts written by Jesus, so perhaps 're-thinking the thoughts of Jesus' is not possible in the sense in which a person's motives, intentions, and purposes are re-enactable through a reading of his own text.[28] But a re-enactment can be achieved, which does not absolve the process of difficulty, if the inquiry loosens its reliance on explicit testimony, and the semantic rather than psychological nature of re-enactment is kept in mind.

The purpose of the following is to show that Bultmann's one-sided interpretation of re-enactment found in his Gifford Lectures (1955) and influential in the work of D. Nineham and J. Macquarrie, is the result of his general approach to the New Testament. The divorce between historical research and historicity mirrors the dualism that Bultmann exploited throughout his work in the interest of his particular understanding of faith. After exploring the main features of

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[25]Bultmann, 'The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus', in (ed.) C. E. Braaten, *The Historical Jesus*, 23.

[26]Bultmann, *History and Eschatology*.

[27]Pannenberg, 'Kerygma and History, 87.

[28]The nature of the NT texts cannot, according to Iain Nicol, "disclose thoughts of Jesus, let alone permit us the luxury of re-thinking them or re-enacting them." 'History and Transcendence', 77f; Joseph Fitzmyer, 'Belief in Jesus Today'. Both cited in Hogan, *Collingwood*, 156f. I suspect, however, that both writers take re-thinking too literally.

Bultmann's theology, I shall move on to a specific but brief analysis of his Gifford Lectures, showing how Nineham and Macquarrie follow him into error. The first two sections of this part will argue that Bultmann's belief that we have no access to Jesus' self-understanding is simply an unwarranted *a priori*, with the added demonstration that his interpretation of re-enactment is weighted too heavily in terms of historicity over against historical explanation. This leaves the final section free to counter the assumptions of Bultmann's approach by demonstrating a much stronger historical intention on the part of the New Testament, together with a correlation between Collingwood and Schillebeeckx on the question of access to Jesus' self-understanding.

For Bultmann historical judgements with regard to Jesus' theological significance are superfluous, because he presupposes that everything necessary is contained in a self-sufficient *kerygma*. This follows from the implicit assumptions of *Formgeschichte* which sought to assign to the early Christian communities the major role in shaping the figure of Christ without any accompanying historical concern for the life of Jesus. Yet this is a false view, because while there is no Jesus without *kerygma* there is no *kerygma* without Jesus. It is true that Bultmann realized this,[29] and did not follow M. Kähler, who in his book *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ* laid the foundations for the tendency of P. Tillich, arguably closer to Kähler than Bultmann, to demonstrate a complete indifference with regard to history.[30] Yet Bultmann was solely interested in 'the that' (*das Dass*) rather than 'the what' (*das Was*) of Jesus' earthly life. In other words, all content is to be ascribed to the *kerygma* of the early Christians. Such an understanding, to be found in his early essay on the significance of the historical Jesus for Paul,[31] was given later expression in his now famous assertion that "the message of Jesus is a presupposition for the theology of the New Testament rather than a part of that theology itself."[32] This is a systematic expression of the conclusions reached by *Formgeschichte* following the collapse of the 'Quest for the Historical Jesus'.

In the wake of the failure of 'Life-of-Jesus' research it dawned upon theologians that the gospel texts were not biographies of a person called Jesus of Nazareth that were concerned with details of personality, but confessional statements about the salvific import of this figure.[33] This

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[29]"It is ... obvious that the Kerygma presupposes the historical Jesus, however much it may have mythologized him. Without him there would be no Kerygma." 'The Primitive Christian Kerygma', cited in (ed.) Braaten, *The Historical Jesus*, 18.

[30]Tillich's scepticism can be gauged by the fact that he accuses Bultmann of attempting to construct a picture of the historical Jesus, *Systematic Theology* 2, 122. See also Tillich's discussion of the possibility that Jesus never lived, 130f.

[31]Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding* 1, 220-46.

[32]Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, I, 3.

[33]"No attempt is here made to render Jesus a historical phenomenon psychologically explicable, and nothing really biographical ... is included ... *Interest in the personality of Jesus* is excluded ... We can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources

discovery, coupled with the idea, itself a consequence of the failure of the Quest, that history can at best only reach probability in its results, made the focus on the confessional nature of the gospels inevitable (which is not a bad thing in itself). Such an attitude to history was held, Collingwood declares, because the historian was "still worried by the fact that however much information we have concerning a given period we still might obtain more, and this more might modify the results already thought secure. Hence", it was argued, "all historical knowledge is uncertain."[34] The failure to realize that the historical problem is a present problem, not a future one, the failure to see that the word 'truth' has no meaning for the historian unless it means 'what the evidence obliges us to believe', meant that 'faith' had to find a basis in something other than history. The 'flight into faith', the search for a 'storm-free' zone insulated from criticism became Bultmann's refuge. Furthermore, the conception of historiography prevalent at the time of kerygma theology aimed to give validity, through the use of a positivistically understood principle of analogy, to those events which are the same as experienced in the present. Yet the biblical witness does not deal with general religious truths but with very particular acts of God. Thus Bultmann and other kerygma and dialectical theologians defined their position against such an approach, but (and this is crucial) also identified history *in toto* with the particular understanding of critical history prevalent at the time.

These conclusions can be seen as 'starting-points' of Bultmann and K. Barth's theology. Yet each derived different conclusions as to the way forward, and this is most clearly evident in their different ways of 'reading' the gospels. For Barth the failure of the liberal quest meant that the gospels presented a concrete picture of Jesus irreducible to critical methods. Barth sought to show that treating the gospels as historical sources deflected from their normative function as witness. Yet it is arguable that Bultmann saw *Formgeschichte* as particularly suited to bring out the peculiar confessional nature of the gospels. Following the discovery that the gospels were composed of small isolated units (pericopae) which were later woven into a narrative, Bultmann found it difficult to imagine that the early Christians had intended to preserve biographical elements of Jesus' life. Rather, *Formgeschichte* is not simply a process of description and classification of differing narrative and confessional genres, but an attempt to establish the *Sitz im Leben* of individual pericopae in relation to the preaching and worship of the primitive church.[35] The process of *Formgeschichte* was peculiar, in so far as it made the biblical witness to Christ the object of historical investigation: this meant that from an historical perspective the event remained obfuscated.[36] On such an assumption the search for an historical Jesus seemed

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show no interest in either, are more fragmentary and often legendary..." Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, 13, 14, his emphasis.

[34]Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, 180. Collingwood is discussing Meyer, the German philosopher.

[35]Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 3f, see Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*, 221.

[36]Pannenberg, 'Kerygma and History', 86.

hopeless. This makes Bultmann a somewhat unlikely figure to deliver lectures on 'History and Eschatology' except when it is realized that he brings *Geschichte* into line with his understanding of eschatology.

The emphasis upon the 'preached Christ' is cemented by Bultmann's interweaving of epistemology with his Lutheran inheritance. While Bultmann agreed with Barth on the principle that God represents the total annulment of man, hence placing liberal theology under Divine judgement, Bultmann retained the liberal attachment to Neo-Kantian epistemology because it spoke directly to his understanding of the Lutheran distinction between 'works' and 'faith'. Following W. Herrmann and perhaps Kähler,[37] Bultmann placed everything which sought, as he saw it, to make faith in Christ a human work - the attempt to base faith upon an objective event or on historical research into Jesus - under 'justification by works'; while his own position of 'justification by faith' sought to place faith in the Christ of the worshipping community. Thus what becomes important for Bultmann is not any objective past-history (*Historie*) but history that is significant for the present (*Geschichte*). In other words, the event of God in Christ is not to be mistaken for an event which can be dealt with on the plane of the horizontal where "to know is to objectify in accordance with the principle of law,"[38] because this treats Christ as an object alongside other objects; but is to be understood as faith in a present 'event' (*Ereignis*) in the believer's own life. This is clearly evident in the following: "To believe in the Cross of Christ does not mean to concern ourselves ... with an objective event ... but rather to make the cross of Christ our own, to undergo crucifixion with him."[39] Such an emphasis, irrespective of existentialism, clearly owes something to the liberalism Bultmann inherited from Herrmann in so far as he refuses to allow faith a basis in an assent to doctrine or authority other than the Word disclosed in Christ. Ultimately, of sole importance is access to the *kerygma* which is given to the believer *via* the process of *Formgeschichte* and demythologising leading to an *Ereignis* in the believer's life. Therefore, while it is true that Bultmann has in view the Barthian idea of 'unbelief', albeit clothed in the Lutheran language of 'works', his preference for Neo-Kantian epistemology discloses his dependence on one side of a dualism which cannot, in my view, bear the weight that is placed upon it.

Bultmann is using the dualism inherent in Neo-Kantian epistemology to disclose something of the nature of faith in what amounts to a peculiar 'anti-foundationalist' ecclesiology. Demythologizing, Bultmann declares, "carries this doctrine [justification by faith] to its logical conclusion in the field of epistemology. Like the doctrine of justification it destroys every false

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[37]Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*, 205-26.
[38]Johnson, *The Origins of Demythologizing*, 50, cited in Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*, 210.
[39]Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth* 1, 36.

security ... Security can be found only by abandoning all security."[40] Bultmann identifies faith with the interpretative side of the dualism over the 'objective' side that is identified with 'works'. This then gives him the confidence to say, "I calmly let the fire [of historical criticism] burn, for I see that what is consumed is only the fanciful portraits of Life-of-Jesus theology, and that means nothing other than 'Christ after the flesh' ... But the 'Christ after the flesh' is no concern of ours. How things looked in the heart of Jesus I do not know *and do not want to know*."[41] In this way historical research into the events of which the *kerygma* speaks is made a mark of unbelief. Instead, because *Formgeschichte* reflects the nature of the gospel texts, one must be satisfied with faith in the *kerygma* understood as something entirely inaccessible to the then current understanding of historical reality *via* the positivistic principle of analogy. Yet such a radical dualism, seen in his definite preference for *Geschichte* over *Historie*, *Ereignis* over the 'objective event', *kerygma* over history, and the present over the past, paradoxically makes the transcendent dependent upon the subjective. That is to say, "if the meaning is not there in the events to be discovered, but rather is brought to the bare events by faith, so that only for faith can they be said to have this or that meaning, then the question of content is delivered over into the individual's subjectivity and its arbitrariness."[42] On this view, the radical transcendence of God is only another name for the radical trust of faith in its own *autonomy* understood as an act of decision.[43] The problem is that Bultmann's dualism is caught in a positivist trap, he can see no way round the Neo-Kantian problem of 'objectification' except to take flight from it into an *Ereignis* which insulates the faith within an autonomous ecclesiology founded upon devotion. He not only holds to a thorough-going dualism between nature and history (the concept of process secured Collingwood against this), he also has a dualistic concept of history. On the one hand, there is

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[40]Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth* 1, 210-11.

[41]Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding* 1, 132, my emphasis.

[42]M. Westphal, 'Hegel, Pannenberg', 276-93.

[43]Heidegger's concept of 'decision', which Bultmann borrows, is representative of the 'philosophy of crisis'; a 'movement' of thought, at once nationalistic and anti-democratic, which demanded revolutionary change. It is an expression of the search for the true Germanic Spirit as against Western decadence, liberalism, individualism, mechanism. It is a concept that lacks content and instead calls for a decision whose only value is revolution *per se*. It is understandable, then, that Bultmann's adoption of Heidegger's terminology provides the interpreter with a key to Bultmann's own vision of the 'theology of crisis'. That is to say, the essential point is that revolution *per se* defines the character of his theology. As J. Moltmann asserts: "with the theology of the Word of God is associated a programmatic opposition to that theology which begins with objects and elements present in human beings and their world, with religion or religious experience, history or saving facts." (Cited in Scholder, *Requiem*, 43f.) So that Barth's famous 'No' is turned by Bultmann into a radical programme to carve out an autonomous, self-sufficient *Ekklesia* taken out of the stream of history (as symbolised by 'critical history', the culture of the nineteenth century and the crisis of Weimar), and any attempt to overcome this crisis which means using the methods of the 'Yes' was only an attempt to escape this judgement. On this view theology is itself in danger of becoming identified with the Germanic Spirit. Friedrich Gogarten is, I suspect, guilty of this; Barth certainly not. Bultmann's position is ambiguous.

'authentic' knowledge of the real historical event which corresponds to *Geschichte*, and on the other, 'inauthentic' secondary historical knowledge, that of bare objective fact.[44] The unresolved problem of integrating these two poles means Bultmann is in danger both of restricting God's action in history to the level of interpretation rather than event, and of treating historical fact as one thing and the believer's knowledge of it as another.

It is evident that the problem of 'objectification' and its ensuing dualism forced Bultmann to place more weight on interpretation over event, on the present over the past, and such themes then become distilled *via* Bultmann's Gifford Lectures in Nineham and Macquarrie's interpretation of re-enactment.

§ 2. The Theological Interpretation of Re-enactment

It is important to note that there has been no use of the doctrine of re-enactment within a theological context that is adequate to Collingwood's own understanding.

In his early work, collected together in volume one of *Basic Questions in Theology*, Pannenberg appropriates Collingwood's understanding of the historical imagination in order to criticize the principle of analogy at work in critical history after Troeltsch. He employs Collingwood's idea of an 'imaginary picture of the past' both as a postulate of universal history (as a principle of continuity and coherence) and as a principle against an *a priori* use of analogy that suggests that 'dead men don't rise'.[45] His appeal is made in order to demonstrate that the resurrection was an historically accessible event. Collingwood's criticism of positivism provides Pannenberg with the means to bridge the gap between event and interpretation through which he offers a *theonomous* rather than *autonomous* account of history. But this means, according to H. Burhenn, that his conclusions "are no longer simply historical".[46] Pannenberg, then, uses Collingwood's arguments against positivism in order to place theological presuppositions within historical method. In other words, Pannenberg's programme is an audacious attempt to eradicate not only the dualism between historical method and faith in critical history after Troeltsch, but, it seems, the real tension between history and faith, in order to show that historical research *of itself* can reveal the revelatory status of the resurrection. I am certain that Collingwood would have accused Pannenberg of committing the 'Fallacy of Swapping Horses' in so far as he is attempting to answer questions with one 'method' that require another.[47] Furthermore, Pannenberg is selective in his use of Collingwood. In his desire to focus on the resurrection as an historical event, he appropriates parts of Collingwood's historical method without mention of the central importance of the doctrine of re-enactment.

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[44]H. Ott, *Geschichte und Heilsgeschichte*, 10, cited in Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*, 246.
[45]Pannenberg, *Basic Questions* Vol. 1; Hogan, *Collingwood*, 182-97.
[46]H. Burhenn, 'Pannenberg's Argument', 378.
[47]Collingwood, *The New Leviathan*, 2. 66-2. 74.

I find the attention that Bultmann gives to Collingwood in his Gifford Lectures somewhat surprising. Read any of Bultmann's other writings and, to my knowledge, no other reference to Collingwood will be found. So when Bultmann declares, "The best that is said about the problems of history is, in my view, contained in the book of R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*"[48] it must be remembered that he is speaking to a British audience. Along similar lines Jaspers' contention that Bultmann made Christianity dependent upon Heidegger[49] struck a nerve, and if it did not force Bultmann to focus on Collingwood, it at least provided him with a motive, when the time came, to find another voice which he saw as different yet compatible. So while it is true to say that Bultmann remains re-enactment's principal theological advocate,[50] his use of this concept is in no way exemplary. In fact Bultmann's interpretation is so influenced by the assumptions I sketched above that he gives an exclusively one-sided account of re-enactment in terms of historicity rather than historiography.

The principal point to be gained from Bultmann's Gifford Lectures is that "Jesus Christ is the eschatological event not as an established fact of past time but as repeatedly present, addressing you and me here and now in preaching."[51] Such an emphasis, which echoes the presentation of Bultmann's theology already given, is anticipated by showing how St. Paul works out the consequences of the idea that Christ is the end of history. Bultmann comments: "this hope [of salvation] is conceived in terms of the individual. Paul no longer looks into the history of peoples and the world nor into a new history. For *history* has reached its end, since Christ is the end of the *law* (Rom. x. 4)."[52] Here Bultmann makes a (false) parallel between law and history.[53] For Bultmann historical research corresponds to law, which mirrors his rejection of 'objectification' in Neo-Kantian epistemology. As a result, not history but eschatology is the origin of the New Testament *kerygma*. This allows the *kerygma* to achieve autonomy over against its historical basis; for since the basis of the *kerygma* is concentrated in the resurrection of Jesus, the attempt can be made to set this event in opposition to all other history as an eschatological event because it is inaccessible to historical method.[54] This opens the way for the

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[48]Bultmann, HE, 130. While he thought highly of Collingwood it is significant that when Collingwood diverged from Heidegger, in not stressing that self-knowledge was "consciousness of responsibility over against the future," Bultmann was quick to criticise him. HE, 136.
[49]Macquarrie, *The Scope*, 163.
[50]Hogan, *Collingwood*, 156.
[51]HE, 151f.
[52]HE, 43, my emphases.
[53]Pannenberg states: "But this parallel is not convincing. Law and history are not comparable for Paul. He is concerned with the question of whether the law or the promise controls history (Rom. 4; Gal. 3)." 'Redemptive Event and History', 36. Furthermore, the *solus Christus* principle i.e. 'Salvation lies in no other' (Acts 4.12) refers not to an *individualistic* emphasis on justification by faith, but to an *ecclesiological* emphasis on belonging to the 'body of Christ'.
[54]Pannenberg, 'Kerygma and History', 87.

emphasis on historicity as a correlate of eschatology. Bultmann comments: "But although the history of the nation and the world had lost interest for Paul, he brings to light another phenomenon, the historicity of man, the true historical life of the human being, the history which every one experiences for himself and by which he gains his real essence."[55] Bultmann's interpretation of re-enactment in terms of historicity follows from such an emphasis.

As I have indicated already (and against Jasper Hopkins), Bultmann's Gifford Lectures do not err "so egregiously in their interpretation of Collingwood's philosophy of history"[56] when they take up the theme of historicity. Rather, I follow Macquarrie who shows that the 'existentialist' label in its broadest sense - the sense which comes from Collingwood when he says, "[t]he historian's thought must spring from the organic unity of his total experience, and be a function of his entire personality with its practical as well as its theoretical interests"[57] - is not alien to Collingwood's approach.[58] Yet be that as it may, Bultmann's interpretation of re-enactment is still a one-sided venture which leads to misleading consequences.

In the process of what is little more than a presentation of a string of quotations from *The Idea of History*, Bultmann fastens upon Collingwood's overcoming of positivism and the emphasis on self-knowledge as the two basic factors that are compatible with his understanding of historicity. The erosion of the dualism between the subject and object provides the means of Bultmann's divorce between historical research and historicity. Collingwood expresses this by saying: the object of historical knowledge is "not a mere object, something outside the mind which knows it: it is an activity of thought, which can be known only in so far as the knowing mind re-enacts it and knows itself as so doing."[59] However, the fact that, for Bultmann, the object of history is *not* independent of the mind which contemplates it, shows he has the *kerygma* in view, rather than an objective historical event. He goes so far as to say that Collingwood's understanding implies that "the relation of subject and object which is characteristic for natural science has no value for historical science."[60] There is loss as well as gain here. Bultmann's account is plausible in so far as he follows Collingwood in the anticipation of themes found in Gadamer's *Truth and Method*. The idea that historical knowledge is itself an event, and that the

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[55]HE, 43.
[56]Hopkins, 'Bultmann', 233.
[57]IH, 305, cited by Bultmann, HE, 133.
[58]"The designation [existentialist] is a very loose one. The three thinkers who seem to have had the greatest influence on Bultmann's view of history, Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger, and R. G. Collingwood, are very diverse; the existentialist label is not applicable *simpliciter* to any one of them ... We can only say that they show a certain affinity in their several approaches to the problems of history, and since this affinity centres on *the relating of history to the historical existence of the historian himself*, we find it convenient to speak of an 'existentialist' approach to history." Macquarrie, *The Scope*, 81, my emphasis.
[59]IH, 218; Bultmann, HE, 119.
[60]HE, 133.

historian is part of the process he is studying, revealing the relativity of his situation, are fundamental to Bultmann's appropriation of Collingwood.[61] Yet Bultmann is using historicity as a substitute for historical method. His real concern is knowledge of self rather than knowledge of the past. That is to say, he is criticising the idea that history is an objective representation of a past reality in favour of the 'event' of present self-understanding. This is echoed in the form-critics' emphasis on *Sitz im Leben* which does not express reality as such, but the meaning reality has for the individual Christian.[62] Bultmann's criticism of this tendency is understandable in so far as he is following the understanding of history current in his time, but it led him to equate this tendency with history *in toto*. Thus, by dissolving the distinction between the subject and object what remains is simply the new reality of the present self. The exegete, in other words, might think he is investigating a past reality, but he is really presenting his own self-understanding. While there are obvious points of contact with Collingwood, absent from Bultmann is the necessary connection of re-enactment with the explanation of a historical as opposed to eschatological event, something which upholds the 'otherness' proper to the past and discloses the validity of the subject-object relation for historical science.

The appeal to self-knowledge cements the emphasis on the present self by bringing the idea of the individual to the fore: self-knowledge corresponds to the fact that in "knowing his situation the individual knows himself."[63] In this way, Bultmann uses Collingwood as a means to show that historicity can, on the basis of his tendentious interpretation of Pauline eschatology, give the individual believer access to the 'preached Christ' since this method is above time and history. He quotes Erich Frank approvingly in this regard: " ... history comes to its end in the religious experience of any Christian 'who is in Christ'. In his faith he is already above time and history ... In his faith the Christian is a contemporary of Christ, and time and the world's history are overcome."[64] It is little wonder that the theme of the annulment of time, already so much part of the misplaced criticism of Collingwood's doctrine of re-enactment, becomes central to its theological use. Furthermore, the attempt to dissolve the distinction between subject and object is clearly what Bultmann has in mind when he emphasizes the importance of self-understanding. The former idea is a feature of Nineham's account of re-enactment, while the latter idea features in the work of Macquarrie.

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[61]"From this it follows that historical knowledge is itself a historical event ... within which the historian himself is interwoven as well as the object he endeavours to know." HE, 133.
[62]See Kasper's *The God* for the connection between linguistic philosophy and *Formgeschichte*, 91.
[63]HE, 135.
[64]HE, 153.

Nineham's enduring concern has been with the problem of the 'culture gap' between the past and present disclosed by the development of historical consciousness.[65] The central issue for Nineham is how an exegete's interpretation of the New Testament is to remain faithful to the original meaning of the text. The mistake which he berates exegetes for making in this regard is their reading of the past through the presuppositions of the present. He therefore advises, as the central task of the New Testament exegete, the 'passing over' into the experience of early Christianity in order to give full weight to the 'pastness of the past', in order to disclose its meaning on its own terms.[66] Only after this is accomplished is it possible to deal with what is revealed on our own terms.[67] Now the use of 'passing over', a favourite metaphor borrowed from J. S. Dunne's book *The Way of All the Earth*, accentuates Nineham's problematic of the 'culture gap'. That is to say, Nineham's belief in a gulf of temporal distance between the past and present necessitates the attempt to 'pass over' this gulf and enter the past, i.e. annul temporal distance by a process of re-enacting the past as past.[68] This is a clear misinterpretation of re-enactment because the important idea of the continuity of tradition is not reached. Such an interpretation relies on an atomic-like past which can be understood only if the exegete achieves complete contemporaneity. This interpretation is, therefore, a species of Romantic hermeneutics. Nineham is so fixated upon the 'culture gap' that he sees distinct cultures as hermetically sealed units. Each culture's expression of reality, while peculiar to it, is peculiar in the further sense that the presuppositions of each culture *determine* their form of reality. Thus, Nineham arrives *via* a reading of Troeltsch, Bultmann and a misreading of Collingwood, at ideas encouraged by Bultmann's doctrine of demythologizing.

For his part, Macquarrie exploits Bultmann's attempt to dissolve the distinction between subject and object to give an account of the Atonement using Collingwood's 'outside-inside' metaphor as a *methodological tool* to achieve this. His argument is as follows: "Considered objectively, from the outside, how could a past event, such as the crucifixion of Jesus, be regarded as also an atonement which is still efficacious today? ... if we seek to understand this event from the inside - by thinking ourselves into it, by participation - ... then its character as atonement becomes clear. For is it not the case that the Christian who gets inside this event - by being 'crucified with Christ' - ... experiences the event as the attaining of wholeness, as an atonement?"[69] In one respect this is quite legitimate in so far as it is not knowing what people did but understanding what they thought that is, for Collingwood, the proper definition of the

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[65]See Nineham, *Explorations* and *The Use and Abuse of the Bible*. For critical notices on Nineham's position see Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*; Lash, *Theology on the Way*, 75-92.
[66]Nineham, *Explorations*, 162-65.
[67]*Explorations*, 186.
[68]*Explorations*, 164f.
[69]Macquarrie, *The Scope*, 84.

historian's task. But Macquarrie's way of putting the question reveals that the significance of the cross is for him something 'regarded as an atonement'. The question is 'Were the authors of the New Testament right to make this claim?', and this is not a purely historical question.[70] The exegete, as an historian, cannot answer this question if he is to do full justice to its truth-conditions; it can only be affirmed or denied in faith. Following Collingwood's thesis of 'subjective rationality' all the historian can do is show that certain people believed the cross was an atonement. This shows that ambiguity is an inescapable part of the historical process. History is always, and quite rightly, open to different interpretations. Yet Macquarrie's over extension of the 'outside-inside' metaphor, by which he turns it into a methodological tool in order to retrieve facts unavailable to historical research, eradicates the ambiguity proper to the realm of history. Furthermore, he has placed the metaphor outside its appropriate 'category' - its role in historical explanation. It is evident that the source of this transgression derives from Bultmann's emphasis on historicity, which bypasses the real contingencies of past reality in the interests of an eschatological event.

§ 3. The Historical Intention of the Early Christian Communities

> the *kerygma* is itself meant, on the ground of its own self-understanding, to refer to the past events involving Jesus.[71]

Leaving behind the dualism that coloured Bultmann's theological approach and which allowed other exegetes to formulate the problem of tradition along the dualistic lines of a 'Jesus tradition' and '*kerygma* tradition' or 'history' and '*kerygma*',[72] Schillebeeckx is adamant that there is no tradition without Jesus or *kerygma*: "*kerygma* and a concern with Jesus of Nazareth go hand in hand from the very outset."[73] Furthermore, rather than posit a single *kerygma* based in Jerusalem and spreading outwards, the available evidence leads Schillebeeckx to conclude that there existed a variety of local Christian communities, differentiated in terms of culture and social setting,

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[70]In reply Macquarrie might refer to Collingwood's assertion, "Nothing could be a completer [sic] error concerning the history of thought than to suppose that the historian as such merely ascertains 'what so-and-so thought', leaving it to some one else to decide 'whether it was true'." IH, 215f. But this example does not apply to the problem in view. It is rather a criticism of the positivism in the work of an historian like Ranke who refused to judge the facts, which he summed up in the phrase *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. (see IH, 126-33). It follows that the historical question concerning the revelatory status of an event does not touch its truth-condition in the fullest sense. In this context the historical question is of the form, 'Why did such-and-such believe in the revelatory status of this historical event?' This is clearly different from the question 'Were they right to believe this?' where 'right' means 'does it have revelatory status?' On purely historical grounds it is impossible to point to any self-evident basis for an affirmative answer to this question.

[71]*Jesus*, 72.

[72]*Jesus*, 678 n. 25.

[73]*Jesus*, 82.

which presented their own Christological confession with a corresponding historical interest in a particular aspect of Jesus' life: a Parousia Christology showing an interest in Jesus as 'Eschatological Prophet'; a Solomonic Son of David Christology with an interest in Jesus' miracles; a Wisdom Christology with an interest in Jesus' wise sayings; a Crucified-and-Risen Christology showing an interest in Jesus' passion and crucifixion.[74] While these various christological confessions, concentrating as they do on particular aspects of Jesus' life, exhibit a restricted field of historical vision, Schillebeeckx declares, quite rightly, that the burden of proof rests with those who would argue for a later process of shaping by the early church rather than those, like himself, who are prepared to 'derive' Jesus from certain sayings and acts of his recorded in the New Testament.[75] Such an argument is not meant to establish that the record of Jesus' sayings and actions is an historically exact record of events, this would run contrary to the whole tenor of Schillebeeckx's approach, i.e. a 'theology of Jesus'. Yet such insight enables Schillebeeckx to relativize the dualism *Formgeschichte* encouraged between historically authentic facts about Jesus and *kerygma*. Accordingly, he makes use of a distinction between historically authentic material about Jesus ('authentic matter of fact'), and historically unauthentic material about Jesus which is nevertheless true in substance to Jesus' basic message ('authentic Jesus'). The purpose of this very important distinction is to show that we can learn about Jesus even from historically unauthentic material, because it sometimes exhibits a real continuity with Jesus' basic message. Thus, Schillebeeckx agrees with G. Schille when he says that "it is not form but substance that ties a logion to its point of origin."[76] The emphasis upon 'substance' is a clear sign that Schillebeeckx, like Collingwood, is attuned to the merits of a 'post-critical' use of explicit testimony, especially when it is deemed historically unauthentic.

§ 4. The 'Picture of Jesus' as the Basis for the Inference Concerning Jesus' Self-understanding

The failure to move beyond the immediately given was a feature of the negative use of testimony practised in critical history. As Collingwood demonstrated in his fable of John Doe, the critical historian loses interest in the statement of a witness when the statement proves to be unauthentic. Furthermore, a statement is read on the understanding that what it does not tell the historian in so many words he can never find out from it at all.[77] Applied to the New Testament, such a programme contributed to the general erosion of dogma. A. von Harnack's belief that "the Gospel, as Jesus proclaimed it, has to do with the Father only and not with the Son," led in his judgement to a denial of the Trinitarian character of God.[78] What is lost sight of here is that

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[74]*Jesus*, 81-85, 403-438.
[75]*Jesus*, 83; A. W. Mosley, 'Historical Reporting'.
[76]*Jesus*, 98.
[77]IH, 269.
[78]Harnack, *What is Christianity*, 144, cited in Galvin, 'From the Humanity of Christ', 263.

historical judgements are *tested against* not *founded upon* the sources. The critical historian, in other words, has not sufficiently reflected on the fact that historical research is driven by the correlation between the questions asked and the possible answers that these questions imply. Once this step is taken, testimony is decentred and placed within a logic of question and answer. Thus while the critical historian says 'There is nothing in such-and-such a statement about such-and-such a subject', the post-critical historian replies, 'Do you not see that in this passage about a totally different matter this subject is implied?' It follows that it is the question asked which in many respects determines the evidence used in historical enquiry. The narrowness of the critical treatment of testimony is revealed if we ask, 'On what grounds is the critical inference based?', and the answer is: 'It is based on the idea that only *explicit* statements are legitimate vehicles of historical fact.'

By contrast, Schillebeeckx realizes that the presence or absence of explicit Christological statements cannot by themselves justify an inference. As Collingwood demonstrated in his Inaugural, if the historian convinced himself by a study of the evidence that Bacon wrote the plays of Shakespeare, and he were to find an autograph document confessing the fact, he would by no means have verified his conclusion. A new question arises as to the document's authenticity.[79] Explicit statements only become history within a framework of meaning, and this framework, this criterion of the historian's inference, is the coherence of his construction. This point has two aspects to it.

In the first place, both Collingwood and Schillebeeckx argue for a 'post-critical' history which surmounts the purely empirical question, i.e. 'Did such-and-such an event happen or not?' and realize that within the intention that goes with history proper - history as not knowing what events followed what, but knowing what people thought (their intentions and purposes) - the question to ask of a statement is not whether it is true or false, but what it means.[80] Thus, the primary question should not be, for example, 'Did Jesus actually perform these miracles?', but: 'What is it they signify, what are people wanting to say when they relate or report such miracles of Jesus?'[81] Only after this question has been asked can the question of historical authenticity be broached.[82] Such an approach is much broader than a critical approach like *Formgeschichte* which tended to leave unauthentic statements on one side, creating a unique but vacuum-like Jesus bereft of any narrative identity. Instead, by concentrating upon how Jesus came across to those who encountered him - as someone who 'goes about doing good' - it is Jesus' own behaviour which is fundamental to a post-critical approach. In fact, both Collingwood and Schillebeeckx's

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[79]IH, 243.
[80]IH, 260; Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 76-80.
[81]*Jesus*, 79.
[82]Notice that this was the approach that Collingwood followed in his lectures. *Autobiography*, 27.

resort to post-critical history can be interpreted as a move to a narrative approach over-against a sole emphasis on critical methods that have an extremely narrow field of application.[83]

The second aspect important to narrative coherence is what Collingwood calls the historian's 'imaginary picture of the past'. As we have seen from chapter five, such a 'picture' corresponds to a narrative which incorporates everything that leads to a coherent and continuous account, an account "which is partly a narrative of events, partly a description of situations, exhibition of motives, analysis of characters."[84] An emphasis on narrative coherence enables the use of historically unauthentic material, giving credence to Schillebeeckx's programme of distinguishing between 'authentic Jesus' and 'authentic matter of fact'. In other words, even material which has proved historically unauthentic, for example the fact that Jesus never referred to himself as the 'Son of God' can nevertheless, after exploring what he did and said, be shown to be 'authentic Jesus', that is, faithful to the truth surrounding his person. Thus the basic idea of Schillebeeckx's approach, in conscious opposition to Bultmann's denial that we have no access to Jesus' self-understanding, comes down to the fact that the justification of an inference concerning that self-understanding depends upon the interplay between the construction of a 'picture of Jesus' and what can be called implicit or 'indirect' evidence. With regard to the latter, Schillebeeckx declares, "[a]ctually this fits well with the anthropological insight that, whether for himself or for others, it is only in his actions that a man is finally to be understood. For although Jesus never posited himself ... as the second subject of his proclamation, in the business that occupied him and with which he identified himself, he also revealed his self-understanding."[85] Such an argument provides cause enough to overcome Bultmann's assumption, which in itself is *theological* as opposed to historical, and brings Schillebeeckx into line with Collingwood. By this I am referring to Collingwood's dictum that 'mind is what it does' which I sought to align with the analytical emphasis on an agent's behaviour over-against any accent upon an occult mental state. Furthermore, in a very brief and little noticed, but nonetheless important passage from *The Idea of History*, Collingwood criticizes Bradley for stopping short at the point where he claims that the historian can 're-enact' the statement of a witness, thus making this statement one's own. There is another step, according to Collingwood, whereby "the historian re-enacts in his own mind not only the thought of the witness but *the thought of the agent whose action the witness reports*."[86] To such a task we now turn.

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[83]See *Jesus*, 81-98.
[84]IH, 245.
[85]*Jesus*, 258.
[86]IH, 138, my emphasis.

(III)

'He Set His Face Toward Jerusalem': Re-enacting Jesus' Approach to Death

§ 1. Introduction

In the following section I shall show that Schillebeeckx's account of the rejection and death of Jesus is, in essentials, an excellent example of re-enactment. Yet in order to avoid presenting an account that lacks the necessary narrative qualities of continuity and coherence, I shall follow the structure of Schillebeeckx's account, leaving an appeal to the formal model of re-enactment implicit. The aim is not to present the model of re-enactment as a rigid structure which is simply fleshed out by Schillebeeckx's account; the relationship between the two can never be that of an explicit structure which is then embellished by narrative ornamentation; the historian never works in such a way. By contrast, if re-enactment is what always happens when the historian is investigating the role of an historical agent, that is, if the narrative *is* the re-enactment, then the aim is to follow the constructed narrative, in this case Schillebeeckx's account, in order to make the implicit use of re-enactment explicit. In other words, it matters little whether Schillebeeckx is conscious of the doctrine of re-enactment or not; because if he is constructing a narrative involving an analysis of an agent's motives and purposes (and of course it is my contention that he is), then re-enactment is what he is doing.

After I have demonstrated, in the next section, that Schillebeeckx's account of Jesus' approach to death is an example of re-enactment, I shall add a few remarks about Schillebeeckx's understanding of hermeneutics. My aim is to connect the main argument of this chapter which follows the structure of Chapters 2-5 to what was said about re-enactment in Chapter 6. Here the focus will be on Schillebeeckx's appeal to the concept of 'universal significance' as the term which most effectively addresses the issue of Christ's divinity.

§ 2. The Death of Jesus, Viewed in the Context of his Earthly Life

> What is overlooked here is that while there certainly is a 'breakage-point' [between Jesus on this earth and Christ in the preaching of the Church], it is to be located within the ministry of the historical Jesus, in the resistance to him and the rejection of his message. And the insistent question arising out of this is whether that rejection, as a broad fact of Jesus' earthly life, did not give him occasion in one way or another to interpret his approaching death prior to the event.[87]

Such a judgement, expressive not only of a conscious opposition to Bultmann but to the school of the 'New Quest for the Historical Jesus', is made by Schillebeeckx in order to suggest that the life and death of Jesus is all of a piece, achieving its unity in Jesus' radical confidence in the Father, whatever the empirical and historical circumstances might be. The death of Jesus is not an

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[87] *Jesus*, 294.

isolated event; rather, "he died just as he lived, and he lived as he died."[88] The rejection, as a broad fact of Jesus' life, provides, in Schillebeeckx's view, the terms of reference for both the historical and christological problem. That is to say, placing the emphasis on the rejection of Jesus, thereby indicating that the problem does not arise only with Jesus' death, means that "the fundamental tenets of soteriology are established by developing the implications inherent in the call to follow after Jesus rather than by way of a developing reflection on the saving significance of Jesus' death as such."[89] The emphasis on discipleship, which in itself is evidence of the hermeneutic accent in Schillebeeckx's account, highlights the importance of Jesus' self-understanding to the argument. Yet this is not to appeal to a quietism which would seek to nullify the legitimate distinction between Jesus' acceptance of God's will, 'Not my will but your will be done' (Mk. 14.36), and Jesus' evaluation of the purpose of this will: for in spite of the "lethal threat posed by 'official Jerusalem', [he] deliberately and of set purpose made his way to that city."[90] So that "[h]owever much conditioned in part by historically concrete situations," Schillebeeckx declares, "it is an individual's capacity actually to 'make history' that provides us with a hermeneutic key to the understanding of his identity."[91] Like Collingwood, the emphasis on agency leads Schillebeeckx to recognize 'the explosive historical force'[92] of the life of Jesus which, as an irreducible fact, confronts those scholars who seek to reduce the earthly reality of Jesus to a presupposition of kerygmatic theology. If the question of discipleship is the central issue, then appeal to Jesus' self understanding is unavoidable, in so far as that self-understanding is disclosed *via* the manner of his own life and approach to death. The task, then, is to reflect upon Jesus' journey to Jerusalem in order to reveal the motive behind Jesus' voluntary act of suffering and death.

§ 3. Jesus in Face of his Approaching Death: Elements of his Self-understanding

There are, according to Schillebeeckx, two basic factors that provide a prism through which Jesus' situation at the time of his death can be viewed. The first is Jesus' consciousness of being the 'latter day prophet' like Moses (Deut. 18:15), and the second is his extraordinary use of the word *Abba* in speaking of God. Both these factors, in conjunction with his historical rejection, combine in Jesus' decision to go up to Jerusalem.

One of the basic tenets of the book *Jesus* is that the first Christian interpretation of Jesus in the period before the New Testament was the conception of the eschatological prophet like

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[88]*Jesus*, 306.
[89]P. Phillips, 'Schillebeeckx's Soteriological', 76.
[90]*Jesus*, 298.
[91]*Jesus*, 19.
[92]*Jesus*, 654.

Moses.[93] This conception was not simply a post-Easter affirmation, but has its source in Jesus' own self-understanding. So that it not only provides the continuity between the earthly Jesus and the Christ proclaimed by the Church,[94] but the accent upon the *prophetic* self-awareness of Jesus sheds light on the fact of his rejection. Furthermore, the inherent critical edge to a prophetic role acts as a protocol against any triumphalism or any premature divination of Jesus in the Church.[95]

For the Deuteronomic tradition Moses is the mediator between God and the people (Deut. 5.5); at the same time he is a suffering mediator, because he suffers for his people Israel (Deut. 9.15-19; 9.25-29). Yet he is set apart from the 'other prophets' because unlike them, to whom God speaks in visions and dreams, 'he is entrusted with all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth' (Num. 12.6-8), 'face to face, as a man speaks to his friend' (Ex. 33.11). Schillebeeckx finds clear signs of the tradition of the eschatological prophet in the earliest (Mark) gospel and the latest (John), in Stephen's speech in Acts and in Q. Furthermore, all the gospels present the theme: Jesus is a prophet, but not like the others (but see esp. Mk. 6.14-16 and 9.2-9). It is clear to Schillebeeckx that this tradition has a place in the historical reminiscence of Jesus' life in so far as his words and deeds provoked strong reactions on the part of the people. There was something extraordinary about Jesus (see Mk. 3.21) which gave rise to a diversity of opinion which Schillebeeckx concentrates into the theme of whether Jesus was 'of the devil' - the 'anti-christ' - (Mk. 3.22; Mt. 12.24; Lk. 11.15; Jn. 7.20)[96] or possessed by the Spirit of God - a prophet (Lk. 7.18; Jn. 8.48-50).[97] To be a prophet like Moses, but greater, has obvious consequences for Jesus' own attitude towards the Torah. This is not to say that Jesus thought of himself as a new lawgiver, that would be contrary to the facts; rather in line with, but all the same independent of, the Graeco-Jewish ideas of the prophet of the latter days as the 'true teacher of the Law', Jesus' consciousness of being a prophet places the emphasis on the rule of God, which prompts him to stand up for the poorest and weakest but also to liberate the people in general from a constricting view of God as enshrined in the orthodox practice of the law.[98] Schillebeeckx concentrates this emphasis in a brief account of Jesus' cleansing of the Temple in order show that this incident throws light on his prophetic consciousness and the question of his authority. The cleansing of the temple "was a prophetic act, intended by Jesus to engender penitence and the conversion of Israel, in the 'latter days'. It was in no sense therefore a radical assault on Temple or cult, still less a

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[93]*Jesus*, 274-282, 475-480; IR, 64ff.
[94]*Jesus*, 479; IR, 67.
[95]"This original view of Christ as prophet, a concept which does not make other honorific titles superfluous, has almost vanished from our Christian preaching. Therefore Christ can be made into a heavenly icon, moved so far on the side of God, who himself has already vanished from the world of men, that as a prophet he loses all critical force in the world." IR, 66.
[96]See *Jesus*, 274-82, esp. 276f.
[97]*Jesus*, 475.
[98]*Jesus*, 229-56.

solemn and direct 'messianic' proclamation discarding the Jewish cult in favour of an eschatological universalism that would open up the Temple to all nations. It has nothing to do, in fact, with a Temple purification; the scene takes place in the Temple courtyard."[99] Yet while Schillebeeckx is alive to the explosive and fateful political consequences of such action, his real concern is with the equally historical fact of Jesus' general rejection.[100] Thus, unlike some contemporary exegetes,[101] he is not primarily after an answer to the question 'Why was Jesus killed?' This is shown in his desire to place the cleansing of the Temple in the middle of Jesus' ministry, taking away the immediate motive for Jesus' crucifixion which is common to the Synoptics.[102] This at once illustrates the centrality of Jesus' own self-understanding to Schillebeeckx's account in so far as the fact of rejection - a rejection of Jesus' message, hence his conception of discipleship - provides the historical motive for his concentration on a more intimate group of disciples.[103]

This latter accent upon a general rejection of Jesus echoes the other major element of the conception of the eschatological prophet. There is no hint within this conception of an emphasis upon a Davidic messiah centred around a ruler-figure. When popular ideas of 'kingship' come into prospect, Jesus either compares his destiny with that of a prophet (Lk. 11.49-52) or with the 'Twelve' withdraws from the scene (Mk. 6.30-31; Mt. 14.22; Lk. 9.10-17; Jn. 6.15), signalling his reticence with regard to such ideas and his gradual consciousness of rejection. Historically speaking, Jesus is dismissive towards 'house of David' messianism and speaks of the son of man as the coming judge of the world.[104] It seems likely therefore that by holding out the prospect of suffering, the exact opposite of a triumphalist and political messiah of the Davidic line, Jesus gradually alienated the people in general and was not simply opposed by 'official' circles within Judaism.[105] It is clear that, generally speaking, Jesus appears to enjoy popularity only so long as no danger threatens.[106] Schillebeeckx believes that historical reminiscence concerning the rejection of Jesus lies behind the statement 'Blessed is he who takes no offence in me' (Luke 7.23; Matt. 11.6). In other words, conscious of his prophetic role as mediator between God and the

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[99]*Jesus*, 244.

[100]"If one wants to establish a theology of Jesus ... which is concerned primarily with his life, message and ministry, then the rift which contact with Jesus engendered within the Jewish community of his day must have a fundamental place within it." *Jesus*, 295.

[101]E. Rivkin, *What Crucified Jesus?*

[102]"Thus in the tradition *qua* history, this event is not associated with the solemn entry into Jerusalem." *Jesus*, 243.

[103]"This change in apostolic strategy was apparently the outcome of a growing experience of failure where his preaching in Galilee was concerned." *Jesus*, 296.

[104]The popular reaction to Jesus and Jesus' own response to this reaction is summed up well in the incident at Caesarea Philippi esp. Mk. 8: 31-33.

[105]"it would seem from the Q tradition that the rejection of Jesus' message extended beyond these schematic categories," i.e. 'the Pharisees and Herodians' and 'the high priests and Scribes'.

[106]*Jesus*, 296.

people, as one who brings a definitive message which applies to the whole of history. Schillebeeckx declares that "Jesus realize[d] that his mission in Galilee had broadly speaking failed and that, *convinced of the rightness and urgency of it as he was*, he ... look[ed] for a different outcome, with before him the possibility of total failure."[107] Such a judgement, which focuses, as I have indicated, on Jesus' self-understanding, discloses a theme basic to historical agency: contrary to the interpretation which sees Jesus as a pacifist or as a believer in non-violence whatever the circumstances, which seems to fuel the idea that Jesus' acceptance of the Father's will can be used as a device sufficient to make sense of his death, such that Jesus is presented simply as the victim of other peoples' attempts to get rid of him, the initiative throughout is with Jesus except when he chooses to surrender it.[108] Yet the question is: "Whence does Jesus obtain the unconditional assurance of salvation to which his message of God's coming rule as final well-being for men so positively testifies?"[109] In other words, what is it in Jesus' experience that affords him the opportunity to exercise the initiative, to hold to the idea that in spite of or perhaps through his rejection, his death, he would be vindicated? Schillebeeckx points to an 'answer' to this problem in his emphasis on Jesus' *Abba* experience.

Schillebeeckx makes explicit reference to the fact that the emphasis on the 'eschatological prophet like Moses' through which the idea that God speaks to Moses 'face to face 'as a man speaks with his friend' is predicated on Jesus, can be connected intrinsically with Jesus' experience of 'Abba'.[110] That is to say, Jesus has a special experience of God which is historically exceptional. However, the experience of God as 'Abba' does go deeper than a purely prophetic consciousness (it does not necessarily go beyond the conception of 'eschatological' prophet, since Schillebeeckx unites this idea with the *Abba* experience in order to provide the basic stratum of the 'systematisation' of Jesus' true identity[111]). In fact the depth of this consciousness goes beyond anything that could justify Jesus' proclamation of the coming rule of God. So the source and foundation of his public ministry must be sought in his *Abba* experience. "Out of his *Abba* experience Jesus is able to bring to a man a message of a hope not inferable from the history of our world, whether in terms of individual or socio-political experiences - although the hope will have to be realized even there."[112] This consciousness of *Abba* on Jesus' part cannot be authenticated on historical grounds - the question 'Was Jesus right to understand

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[107]*Jesus*, 298, my emphasis.
[108]See Harvey, *The Morals of Jesus*, 54-7, 97-101.
[109]*Jesus*, 267.
[110]IR, 73. The significance attached to Jesus' *Abba*-experience has been questioned in some quarters, notably by James Barr in his article, 'Abba Isn't Daddy'. Even though Schillebeeckx might be wrong in his assessment of the *Abba*-experience it does not diminish the fact that his account as a whole is an excellent illustration of re-enactment.
[111]See IR, 73 and *Jesus*, 652-69.
[112]*Jesus*, 268.

himself thus?' is not an historical question - but that Jesus thought of himself as having an intimate relationship with God as Father is a fact of history difficult to discount. As such it confirms Collingwood's emphasis on the importance of what I have termed 'subjective rationality'.

From this brief account of Jesus' self-understanding it is clear that, following his consciousness of the general failure of his mission in Galilee, he deliberately made for Jerusalem. It is difficult to reconstruct anything like the correct chronology of this movement from Galilee to Jerusalem; the gospels may be, in Schillebeeckx's view, simply a schematic version of a gradual process. However, that Jesus did go up to Jerusalem as a consequence of general failure, and despite the lethal threat posed to him, is historical fact. There are indications of this realization in the gospels, which, while perhaps post-Easter reflections, do have their roots in the historical life of Jesus. Matthew's απο τοτε - 'From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem' (16.21) - and Luke's 'When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem' (9.51) preserve, I suspect, the general mood of incomprehension on the part of the disciples as to the action of their master. Is there some purpose which we can discern, on the part of Jesus, that may transform the supposedly objective viewpoint that Jesus was committed to a wholly incomprehensible self-destructive course? Was there, so to speak, any method in his madness?

§ 4. The Question of Jesus' Own Interpretation

As Jesus was no fanatic - and that is quite certain from what we know about him - then from a particular moment in his career he must have rationally come to terms with the possibility, in the longer term the probability and in the end actual certainty of a fatal outcome.[113]

The rejection of his message and the prospect of Jesus' personal rejection could hardly, as Schillebeeckx's declares, have constituted a meaningful event in itself. Yet this is not the whole story. While the situation seemed hopeless, if one takes seriously Jesus' own principles and beliefs, then the historian must give a place to Jesus' radical confidence in God as determinative of his action. In other words, from such a standpoint the fundamental point at issue is not to see how the situation determined what was to be done, but how the situation is understood by the agent. We must ask 'how did Jesus come to grips with the 'hard facts' of the situation as he conceived them?' As Schillebeeckx has it, "Jesus himself was faced with the concrete task of reconciling the historical eventuality of his violent death with the assurance of his message about the approaching kingdom of God."[114] It is clear that such an approach is not awash with the explicit historical facts in which Schillebeeckx's account can be anchored. Nevertheless, there are suggestive clues, that, when woven into the context of Schillebeeckx's account, give a continuous

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[113]*Jesus*, 301.
[114]*Jesus*, 302.

picture, one that makes sense. In this way, Schillebeeckx aims at making his account a coherent whole, in which the character of Jesus acts in situations in the only way he can act, and in which we cannot imagine him acting otherwise.

He begins the account of Jesus' understanding of his own death with the logion of unconditional readiness to serve from Mk. 10.45 and Lk. 22.27. This, according to Schillebeeckx, forms a very early soteriological motif whereby the early Christians, in the light of their liturgical practice, ascribe Jesus' self-giving to the point of death as an act of loving service that procures salvation.[115] Following the existence of this soteriological motif, which is somewhat alien to his own approach which focuses on Jesus as the eschatological prophet, Schillebeeckx asks the question: "Did the earthly Jesus himself envisage his death as a 'service performed out of love' and hint at all at this meaning of his death while still living on earth?"[116] At first sight, it is perhaps confusing that Schillebeeckx appeals to the soteriological motif of Mk. 10.45 in order to account for Jesus' self-understanding concerning his death; for the basic tenor of his approach is to say that there is " ... no intrinsic significance to Jesus' death 'in itself' ..."[117] However, while recognising the expiatory nature of Mk. 10.45, Schillebeeckx in fact focuses upon the exhortation to service and leaves on one side the emphasis on 'ransom' (*lytron*), because he is at pains to avoid any idea that Jesus' death was, in the earliest tradition, understood as a sacrifice. As a result, he is reluctant to attribute to Jesus himself any understanding of the saving significance of the death he was about to undergo.[118] It is evident that Schillebeeckx, certainly at this point, no longer trusts Mark as the most reliable source. We can, therefore, take our distance from him in this respect.[119] However, whatever the argument (and it is not to my purpose to pursue it), it is clear that the source of Schillebeeckx's approach is the emphasis on the centrality of Jesus' general rejection in his life as opposed to Christian interpretation of the death as an isolated event. So following the accent on service, he places the Last Supper within the broader context of the life of Jesus as a whole, "by whom salvation imparted by God is tendered under the sign of the fellowship meal."[120] Here the key is Schillebeeckx's idea that following the rejection, Jesus

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[115]*Jesus*, 303-06.
[116]*Jesus*, 306.
[117]*Jesus*, 282.
[118]"One is bound to say that in fact no certain logion of Jesus is to be found in which Jesus himself might be thought to ascribe a salvific import to his death." *Jesus*, 310.
[119]Such a refusal to accept the sacrificial element in the death of Jesus has led MacKinnon to assert that Schillebeeckx displays a marked agnosticism with regard to the soteriological significance of Jesus' death. On the basis of MacKinnon's remarks, Phillips argues that Schillebeeckx's account, while unprepared to make good the distinction between expiation and propitiation, thus making any appeal to sacrifice problematic, can in fact be harmonized with a soteriological emphasis on the basis of an appeal to C. K. Barrett's claim that the true background of *lytron* is to be found in the Hebrew noun *kapparah* (expiation). See, MacKinnon, 'Edward Schillebeeckx' Christology'; Phillips, 'Schillebeeckx's Soteriological'; Barrett, 'Mark 10. 45'.
[120]*Jesus*, 307f.

focused upon a more intimate group of disciples, so that what Jesus offers in the tradition of the Last Supper *via* his continuing fellowship is the true model of service or discipleship.

From the emphasis upon the intimate group of disciples, Schillebeeckx finds it hard to believe that "bearing in mind the concern he is known to have had for his friends, that even in his last days Jesus would have said nothing at all to his disciples about his approaching violent death... As a matter of history, therefore, we must take seriously the likelihood that during the final meal with his friends Jesus will have said or done something to ensure that when he was dead his intimate disciples would not fall for good into despair and disillusion."[121] As is characteristic, Schillebeeckx discounts any patently obvious discussion of the matter, bearing in mind Jesus' refusal to make himself the second subject of his preaching. Here perhaps is a further clue to his reticence in regard to the emergence of a soteriological motif from Jesus himself. There is, according to MacKinnon, a sense in which it belonged to the very substance of Jesus' self-understanding that its subject must await the disclosure of its ultimate secret by the Father.[122] The 'picture of the past' that Schillebeeckx is creating cannot, then, if it is to be a continuous and coherent picture, hold that Jesus simply left his disciples completely in the dark, nor can it hold, knowing what we do know about Jesus' reticence concerning himself, that Jesus indicated that his death would be either a martyr's death or a cultic sacrifice.

The gospel accounts of Jesus' blessing of the bread and cup during the Last supper, although overlaid by later eucharistic practice, display as their central core certain recollected facts of history.[123] Schillebeeckx shows that there is a Pauline-cum-Lucan tradition (Lk. 22.20a; 1 Cor. 11.25) and a Marcan one (Mk. 14.24; Mt. 26.26-28). The Pauline-Lucan tradition can be summarised thus: 'This cup, now proffered, affords a share in the new covenant promised by the prophets, which comes about thanks to my martyrdom.' By contrast in the Marcan tradition the renewing of the covenant comes about by interpreting Jesus' death as a cultic sacrifice in the light of Exod. 24.8: 'This is my blood of the covenant.'[124] Both these passages have been influenced by liturgical practice and so are post-Easter in origin. Yet in both Luke (22.18) and Mark (14.25) Schillebeeckx, following F. Hahn, detects an older vein, which according to Hahn belongs "to the primeval rock of the tradition":[125] 'Truly I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God' (Mk. 14.25). The passage itself, in Schillebeeckx's view, contains two elements: (1) a main feature of the meal is the announcement by Jesus that it is a farewell meal to his disciples. It is the very last cup that Jesus will share with his friends; (2) Jesus offers with it the prospect of fellowship renewed in the kingdom of God.

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[121] *Jesus*, 307.
[122] 'Edward Schillebeeckx' Christology', 212.
[123] *Jesus*, 307.
[124] *Jesus*, 308.
[125] *Jesus*, 308.

The first clause about not drinking again forms, according to Schillebeeckx, the historical core of this tradition, while the 'until the day when ...' is secondary.[126] Thus, despite Israel's rejection of the last prophetic offer of salvation made by God, Jesus, face to face with his death, continues to offer his disciples the cup of fellowship: this shows Jesus unshaken assurance of salvation, so that the addition of the 'until' clause, albeit secondary, is simply a way of making explicit the concrete situation.[127] In other words, the offer of the cup of fellowship, in face of approaching death, still makes perfect sense to Jesus; "he has come to proper terms with his death, which he evidently does not feel to be an absurd miscarriage of his mission."[128]

In view of the emphasis on service, which passages linked to the Last Supper tradition confirm - 'If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all' (Mk. 9.35) - and which reflect Jesus' fundamental attitude to life, it is clear that by continuing to offer the cup in face of death, Jesus persisted to the end in loving service. He did not ascribe any salvific import to his death as such; rather, there is no getting round the historical fact that Jesus offers the cup of fellowship to his disciples as a token that he is not just passively allowing death to overcome him but has actively integrated it into his total mission. He understands and is undergoing his death as a final and extreme service, and he communicated this self-understanding to his intimate disciples under the sign of extending to them the cup of fellowship.[129] Thus, according to Schillebeeckx, "[g]iven all this, the fact that it is impossible to find a *verbum ipsissimum* or authentic saying of Jesus that tells us how he regarded and evaluated his death (excepting ... Mk. 14.25a ...) is really irrelevant. Jesus' whole life is the hermeneusis of his death."[130] Here, in other words, Schillebeeckx places the emphasis upon the picture of the past that he is presenting, making an appeal to an explicit statement from Jesus superfluous: there is no need of an explicit statement because the interplay between intention and action outweighs any appeal to direct testimony.

One can hardly eliminate from Mk. 14.25a the historical suggestion on Jesus' part that fellowship with Jesus is stronger than death.[131] The historian, then, placing the emphasis upon what I have called the 'subjective rationality' of the agent must present the difficult conclusion, perhaps the paradox, that for Jesus the experience of total historical failure and at the same time a passionate belief in God's care of man is no contradiction.[132] Jesus' belief that his death was simply an extension of his mission is then a fact preceding Easter. So Schillebeeckx concludes, in

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[126]*Jesus*, 309.
[127]*Jesus*, 309.
[128]*Jesus*, 309.
[129]*Jesus*, 311.
[130]*Jesus*, 311.
[131]*Jesus*, 310.
[132]*Jesus*, 310.

what is perhaps the most important statement of the whole book: "... even prior to Easter Jesus is saying, in effect at any rate, that the 'Jesus affair' is to go ahead. This is not just a vision born of faith and based solely on the disciples' Easter experience; it is his self-understanding that creates the possibility and lays the foundation of the subsequent interpretation by the Christians ... That Jesus was right in understanding himself thus and was on to the truth when he saw his death as being somehow tied in with his mission to offer salvation cannot of course be legitimated as a fact of history; it can only be dismissed or accepted in faith. *But that he did so is a fact of history hard to deny.*"[133]

§ 5. Displaying the Rationale of Jesus' Action

It is evident from the above that Schillebeeckx has matched Jesus' action with his beliefs about the situation in which he stands. In other words, Schillebeeckx has shown that Jesus' action is appropriate to the situation and therefore really does explain the action. Any alternative actions that might be put forward would not, in Schillebeeckx's view, measure up against Jesus' reasons as indicated by the evidence. Some of the alternative courses of action that Schillebeeckx may have or did consider are as follows:

In the first place, to suggest that Jesus did everything in his power to escape a violent death appears to controvert all the evidence. It is not consistent with his attitude to life. He was rather an extremely disturbing figure who openly provoked conflict and violence. "One would have to declare Jesus something of a simpleton", Schillebeeckx declares, "if it were maintained that he went up from Galilee to Jerusalem in all innocence, without any idea of the deadly opposition he was to encounter there."[134] In other words, despite the growing certainty that his message had failed, and that he himself was in mortal danger, he deliberately made for Jerusalem. This is not the action of someone who wants to avoid death at all costs.

Perhaps then Jesus both willed and sought after his death as the sole possible way of realising the kingdom of God? This would mean that there was an "element of play-acting about his commitment to his message of *metanoia* and the rule of God."[135] Furthermore, this ignores the historical fact that death only comes into prospect after the failure of his mission. In other words, Jesus has the initiative throughout; but this does not imply that he was set on one course of action. Rather, having the initiative enabled him, in conjunction with his steadfast belief in God, to face the facts of his situation as it changed. His situation being what it was, afforded him a motive to embrace his approaching death in a free and deliberate act, so as to incorporate his very death into his life of loving service.

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[133] *Jesus*, 312, my emphasis.
[134] *Jesus*, 299.
[135] *Jesus*, 306.

Finally, following the reasons he had for taking the course of action he did, I mention here his love for an intimate group of disciples; it is inconceivable, as Schillebeeckx so rightly suggests, that Jesus would have simply gone to his death without a word to his friends. As Schillebeeckx presents it, behind the events leading up to and the eventual death of Jesus, there lies the recognition that however catastrophic to the disciples, the outcome was not only foreseen by Jesus but incorporated into his self-understanding. So it must be said with Schillebeeckx: "If we ask whether the disciples can be thought to have grasped what Jesus was getting at prior to the whole event of Easter, the answer must be on the negative side. But after the first shock of his dying, the memory of Jesus' life and especially of the Last Supper must have played a vital role in the process of their conversion to faith in Jesus as the Christ ..."[136]

It is evident from this account that Schillebeeckx's portrayal of Jesus' rejection and death conforms with Collingwood's understanding of re-enactment. In fact the conclusion that I come to is quite simple: re-enactment is the name for the historian's creation of an historical narrative involving the investigation of an historical agent's intentions and purposes as he pursues action appropriate to his situation. Re-enactment is, so to speak, what always happens when we want to give an account of an historical agent's action.

§ 6. Schillebeeeckx and the Hermeneutical Translation of Christ's Divinity

Christians are 'an open letter from Christ, written not on stone tablets but in and through their lives' (II Cor. 3.2f).

Schillebeeckx's turn to hermeneutics, in which I include the practical-critical hermeneutics of 'critical theory', is part of a fundamental shift in his thought, already documented, from theoretical participation to practical anticipation. In this respect, Schillebeeckx's appeal to hermeneutics is part of his belief that no text or dogma is intelligible as a self-sufficient totality valid for all times (thus discounting any biblical or dogmatic literalism); rather, the text or dogma cannot be understood apart from its own historical context and in its relation to contemporary modes of experience. He recognizes, in other words, the 'two horizons' of interpretation. It is clear, however, that along with the hermeneutics of Gadamer, which he commends for its rediscovery of tradition but following Habermas, criticizes for its failure to see that "tradition cannot criticize itself",[137] he integrates the practical-critical hermeneutics of 'critical theory' in order to unite the emphasis on the historicity of interpretation with the stress upon active engagement.

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[136] *Jesus*, 312.
[137] Schillebeeckx, *The Understanding*, 103.

> The question is not whether we know better than the faithful of earlier times. The question is what, in view of the new models of thought and experience, we must do, here and now, to preserve a living faith which in this age and because of its truth has relevance for man, his community and society.[138]

Following his philosophical-theological shift Schillebeeckx sought to investigate anew, with fresh presuppositions, the problem of the relation between the universal and the particular.[139] In other words, Part Four of *Jesus* in particular is an attempt to show how an historical man, Jesus of Nazareth, who was born, lived and died in Palestine during the first decades of the first century, is at the same time the pre-eminent manifestation of God for all people at all times.

Rejecting theoretical participation in favour of practical anticipation, which of itself highlights the problem of relativity, allows Schillebeeckx to show that "total meaning can only come about in an *historical experience*."[140] Schillebeeckx, then, places Jesus of Nazareth at the intersection of total meaning and historical relativity. Thus he says that "the distinctive identity of Jesus must be found in his identification with all men - and that, of course, in the context of his identification with the cause of God."[141] Such a sustained emphasis on the problem of the relation between the universal and the particular has led MacKinnon to suggest that belief in Jesus' universal significance provides Schillebeeckx with contemporary terms of reference in which for men and women today the issue of his divinity is most effectively addressed.[142] MacKinnon teases out what he detects *via* the application of the category of disposition. That is to say, "significance, if applicable to Jesus in Schillebeeckx' sense, must belong to him, and not simply enjoy the status of a quality that we impose upon him in thought and mediation, by use of free, unfettered, imaginative activity..."[143] Universal significance, then, is not an occurrent characteristic whereby significance is imposed, but a dispositional characteristic which speaks of Jesus' identity.[144] I think that, as a contemporary translation of Jesus' divinity, MacKinnon is right to point to Schillebeeckx's use of the category of universal significance. In fact, it is clear that 'universal significance' can be used as a synonym for God, because, following the accent upon its anticipation through historical action or experience, universal meaning is always ahead of human beings, in the future. It is evident that by 'universal significance' Schillebeeckx means to point not to the generality of Jesus, his availability, as it were, but to the fact that we are confronted with God's-being-God in Jesus' being-as-man. The meaning of Jesus' universal

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[138]*Jesus*, 582.
[139]*Jesus*, 575-674.
[140]Schillebeeckx, *The Schillebeeckx Reader*, (ed.) R. Schreiter, 66f, emphasis in original.
[141]*Jesus*, 594.
[142]MacKinnon, 'Schillebeeckx' Christology', 214.
[143]'Schillebeeckx' Christology', 214.
[144]"One can hardly deny that Jesus himself *puts his own person* in an *essential relationship* with the history of mankind." *Christ*, 802, his emphases.

significance can, in other words, be translated as "transcendence lies *in* [Jesus'] human experience".[145]

It is necessary at this point to broaden these remarks somewhat. On the basis of his theological anthropology Schillebeeckx insists that just as every creature evinces, despite its unity, a duality of an aspectual kind - completely of 'itself' and in being so completely 'of God' - so does Jesus (in, it is true, a special way), since his humanity is the measure in which the divine appears, for God is nowhere accessible except in his created manifestations.[146] Here the emphasis is on the 'immanence of transcendence' which appeals to the *referential* nature of such experience. Thus: "this experiential content contains an intrinsic reference to what makes this experience possible and is not constituted by the experience itself."[147] This methodological point is basic to Schillebeeckx's understanding and is concretely applied when he asserts: "Jesus' unique turning to the Father in absolute priority is 'preceded' and supported by the absolute turning of the Father to Jesus."[148] Jesus therefore, while revealing the Father also veils him, because his absolute grounding in the Father is always expressed in human experience (which is just a way of saying that Jesus' transcending humanity is always infinitely inadequate to God's divine transcendence). In the same way, Jesus' openness to the Father, his unique being-for-all (others), is expressed by his preferential option for 'the outcast and sinner'; he has, in other words, universal significance because he is partisan.[149]

By positing the locus of transcendence (divinity) within the humanity of Jesus - so focusing on Jesus' human transcendence - Schillebeeckx refuses any talk of 'union', which in itself is dangerously dualistic - humanity *and* divinity - preferring to talk of "two total aspects: a real humanity in which 'being of God', in this case 'being of the Father', is realized."[150] This is very important, because it means that, following S. Sykes,[151] Schillebeeckx treats the declaration that Jesus is 'truly man' not as an ordinary human statement but as a faith utterance just as much as Jesus is 'truly God'. Yet this is not simply to shift the focus of Christology from a faith utterance about divinity to one about humanity; it is, rather, a realization on Schillebeeckx's part that being-as-man cannot be defined *a priori* and set within predetermined boundaries - this much follows from the accent on the 'immanence of transcendence' - but should be characterized as an 'open form of being' not admitting of any predetermination by Nature.[152] Such a judgement sits well with Collingwood's stress on 'appropriate action' as it was presented in Chapter 4. It was

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[145]*Christ*, 48, 55, his emphasis.
[146]*Jesus*, 652-69.
[147]*Christ*, 55.
[148]*Jesus*, 666.
[149]*Church*, 178.
[150]*Jesus*, 655.
[151]Sykes, 'The Theology of the Humanity of Christ.'
[152]*Jesus*, 654.

affirmed there that the claim to finality on behalf of Enlightenment anthropology, the claim to understand the other person in advance, diminished the unique selfhood of that other person. By contrast, the assertion that appropriate action is the criterion for the assessment of personal identity prohibits the application of a predetermined understanding of human nature to the 'other'. The theologian can, therefore, approach the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth in terms of his 'subjective rationality': that is, Jesus' human nature, and following Schillebeeckx, his 'being-of-the-Father', can be disclosed from an account of his appropriate actions rather than from our more mundane understanding of 'to be expected' (characteristic) actions. The theologian, then, must avoid a kind of amalgam of a God-man, and focus rather on Jesus of Nazareth; and "from a position of 'open knowledge' of what 'being man' properly means, and likewise what 'being God' means" learn from him the real content of both - "and *that* precisely through their interrelation as manifested in Jesus."[153]

Speaking in this way means that Schillebeeckx's refusal, and rightly so, to claim to know the limits of 'being-as-man', enables him to pass from an emphasis on 'humanity' to 'divinity' without assuming any problematic dualism or spatial notion which he detects in talk of a God-man. Rather, he speaks of the transfer in Jesus of the epicentre of his life to God, the Father. This centre, though, is not outside Jesus; this, 'greater than I' (Jn. 14.28), is actually *intimior intimo meo*, so that it "constitutes Jesus' being-as-man in his deepest subsistence as himself."[154] Yet this does not mean that Schillebeeckx advocates a language which captures both the being-as-man and being-as-God. Rather, there is a real humanity, which can in itself be affirmed on purely secular terms as 'human being'; but in the Christian language of faith there is also the affirmation that Jesus is entirely 'of God' where 'of God' "affirms the totally unprecedented depth of Jesus' experience (of himself as gift of God, the Father)" from which the Church proceeded to call Jesus 'the Son of God' to indicate "the constitutive relation of this human person to the Father."[155] In other words, starting from 'being-as-man', albeit 'being-as-man' as an 'open form of being', and a reflection on creatureliness as the grounding of our 'being-as-man' in God,[156] Schillebeeckx, on the basis of the history of Jesus whose source is the *Abba* experience, makes an important distinction between our 'being-as-man' and Jesus' 'being-as-man' in order to assert something about Jesus' unique relationship to God. That is to say, Jesus has his 'being a human person', and is this person *qua* human being thanks to his constitutive relation to the *Father*, whereas we have our 'being a human person' (*qua* human being), thanks to our essential relation to the creator-

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[153]*Jesus*, 604, his emphasis.
[154]*Jesus*, 655.
[155]*Jesus*, 655.
[156]"It should be evident ... that for the religious language which none the less recognizes and approves the distinctive character of non-religious language, this being-a-person, already 'given' as something separate from his 'being of the Father', is nowhere ever postulated." *Jesus*, 656.

God. "For Jesus this implies that his relation to the Father makes him in his humanity Son of God."[157]

While Schillebeeckx's account is very subtle, MacKinnon, who perhaps can be characterized as the inquisitor *par excellence* of suspected subjectivism, understood in this instance in terms of an erosion of the ontology of relations, does detect in his work a hint of a new style of adoptionism.[158] How this might be characterized MacKinnon does not say, but his criticism suggests that 'universal significance' could be understood as something which is bestowed on Jesus.[159] This would be like interpreting the statement 'the Word became flesh' (Jn. 1.14) in terms of an historical process - 'the flesh became Word' - so that the emphasis is placed on what Jesus *becomes*.[160] Schillebeeckx, however, expressly denies any accent on the 'assumption of Jesus into the Logos'.[161] The embargo on setting predetermined limits to being-as-man short-circuits any such idea. Furthermore, on the basis of Schillebeeckx's theological anthropology it is difficult to accuse him of adoptionism in so far as human being itself is grounded in the creative act of God. So, on a higher level, as it were, in his humanity, Jesus is so intimately 'of the Father' that by virtue of this very intimacy he is 'Son of God'. This is not adoptionism because this intimacy, albeit inescapably anthropomorphic, was vested not in himself but in God the Father.[162]

In this respect, the *Abba*-experience becomes the key which points away from an emphasis upon adoptionism towards a conception of divine invitation made concrete in the person of Jesus.[163] That is to say, according to Schillebeeckx, while in the order of the genesis of christological knowledge soteriology precedes christology,[164] in the order of reality, the personal identity of Jesus precedes soteriology.[165] Hence, irrespective of the problem of contingency - that without our affirmation that he is the Christ, Jesus would not be the Christ - 'christology' precedes soteriology. Yet the priority given to a 'theology of Jesus' (hence soteriology) in *Jesus* discloses Schillebeeckx's belief that only *via* the mediation of phenomenology is ontology possible.[166] While, then, he is not attempting to follow O. Cullmann in a 'functional' christology whereby the role that Jesus plays exclusively defines his identity, leaving the question what he is

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[157]*Jesus*, 656.
[158]'Edward Schillebeeckx' Christology', 216.
[159]I am at this stage assuming the deeper reflection on universal significance that I have reviewed.
[160]Lash, *A Matter of Hope*, 144.
[161]*Jesus*, 655f.
[162]*Jesus*, 658.
[163]For much of this paragraph I am indebted to MacKinnon's 'Substance in Christology - a "cross-bench" view'.
[164]*Jesus*, 546-50.
[165]IR, 95.
[166]This is not original of Schillebeeckx, both Husserl, and especially Heidegger ("only as phenomenology is ontology possible", *Being and Time*, 60) stand as his forerunners.

apart from this role to the status of *suggestio falsi*, Schillebeeckx fastens upon the work of Jesus (the kingdom of God) in order to show that, through this work, Jesus is the historical individual through whom God has identified himself with the world, and further, that this is only possible through the realization in Jesus' person of a total receptivity. I am at present drawing upon MacKinnon's reflections on the principle of receptivity in order to bring out what I think Schillebeeckx's is after. It is *via* the *phenomenon* of 'receptivity', explored in his attention to the *Abba*-experience, that Schillebeeckx discloses the *ontological* ground of Jesus' person, i.e. his identity apart from his work.[167] Thus the suggestion of adoptionism is removed when the notion of Jesus' *diakonia* is identified with the continuous offer on the part of the Father made visible in the life of the Son. In this invitation made concrete, Schillebeeckx is drawing upon ideas suggested by the term *homoousion*. Thus, Jesus' divinity, understood as a real humanity in which 'being of God' is disclosed is not a theoretical principle, but, according to Schillebeeckx, a *salvific experience* which, in the light of Jesus' own life, characterizes Christian discipleship in ever changing historical situations.[168]

§ 7. Concluding Remarks

The following remarks, though brief, are given in place of a formal conclusion, because it was always my intention that the present chapter should stand as the conclusion to the thesis as a whole. I do not intend to reiterate all the major points of the thesis since this would be tiresome; rather I aim simply to focus on what I take to be the central issue, namely, how Collingwood's understanding of historical reality complements a particular theological emphasis.

On the evidence of the present chapter it is clear that Schillebeeckx's account of the rejection and death of Jesus provides an excellent illustration of Collingwood's doctrine of re-enactment. In particular, Schillebeeckx's desire to give a much more creative role in the development of the Christian tradition to Jesus' own self-understanding mirrors the emphasis Collingwood thought paramount in historical work. As we saw in Chapter 5, from an early date Collingwood knew exactly what was at stake: "the real Jesus held definite beliefs about God and himself and the world; his interest was not historical but theological. By considering him as a mere fact of history, instead of also an idea in theology, we may be simplifying our task, but we are cutting ourselves off from any understanding and sharing of his consciousness."[169] With Schillebeeckx (and the later Collingwood) we may want to convert the emphasis on consciousness

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[167]However, it is Schillebeeckx's belief that one cannot ever separate the 'phenomena' ('from below') from the 'ontological' ('from above'), both disclose the other. Hence his impatience with proceeding 'from below' and 'above' understood as mutually exclusive procedures. See *Christ*, 432.

[168]"The patristic and indeed the whole Christian tradition has always attempted to define the actual person of Jesus in terms of the purport of the salvation brought by him." *Jesus*, 657.

[169]Collingwood, *Religion and Philosophy*, 43.

to 'self-understanding', thereby annulling any suggestion of psychology in favour of semantics, but what is beyond doubt is that both writers agree on the necessity of Jesus' self-understanding to the bearing of the story and its outcome. Here of course, in the necessity of agency, lies that which is fundamental. Thus, irrespective of their systematic intention, an intention which of its nature takes away the shock of historical reality, the resort to agency to which both Collingwood and Schillebeeckx appeal discloses not only those 'explosive historical forces' I have spoken about, but witnesses to the discontinuity between Christian reality and a metaphysical idealism masquerading as a kerygmatic 'theology of the institution'. Furthermore, to the extent to which hermeneutics justifies an emphasis on a self-sufficient ontology, a counter-balance must be found in an agency that rescues the history of Jesus from a deadening domestication. In this way, agency can disclose the *subversive* nature of Jesus' history and recover for us the true meaning of the phrase 'the freedom of the gospel'.

Collingwood is, therefore, uniquely placed to speak to the present theological situation. On the one hand, the hermeneutical basis of his thought finds echoes in the present emphasis on ecclesiology in Anglo-American theology. The appeal to tradition *via* the thesis of absolute presuppositions discloses the essentially anti-subjectivist basis for life together as *Ekklesia*. Together with Wittgenstein and Gadamer, Collingwood's semantic picture of mind, and his realization that we must accept tradition before we can criticize it means that theologians can re-discover their essential creatureliness by 'going to school' with Collingwood. On the other hand, however, Collingwood's stress on agency acts as a resource that the theologian can use in order to counter the temptation to which Christian theology is continually suspect - that of withdrawing into ecclesiological security. It is perhaps ironic that such an emphasis on historical agency yields one of Barth's fundamental insights: religion "forgets that she has a right to exist only when she continually does away with herself."[170] But as if to witness to the explosive force of historical agency those who understood Barth's insight (re-)enacted the church struggle.

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[170]Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, 67, cited in Scholder, *Requiem*, 71.

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